University of Alberta

Parental Involvement in Decision Making in Independent Schools

by

Frank Brian Voogd

©

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Education

Department of Educational Administration

Edmonton, Alberta

Fall 1996

National Library of Canada
Acquisitions and Bibliographic Services Branch
395 Wellington Street
Ottawa, Ontario
K1A 0N4

Bibliothèque nationale du Canada
Direction des acquisitions et des services bibliographiques
395, rue Wellington
Ottawa (Ontario)
K1A 0N4

Your file *Votre référence*

Our file *Notre référence*

The author has granted an irrevocable non-exclusive licence allowing the National Library of Canada to reproduce, loan, distribute or sell copies of his/her thesis by any means and in any form or format, making this thesis available to interested persons.

L'auteur a accordé une licence irrévocable et non exclusive permettant à la Bibliothèque nationale du Canada de reproduire, prêter, distribuer ou vendre des copies de sa thèse de quelque manière et sous quelque forme que ce soit pour mettre des exemplaires de cette thèse à la disposition des personnes intéressées.

The author retains ownership of the copyright in his/her thesis. Neither the thesis nor substantial extracts from it may be printed or otherwise reproduced without his/her permission.

L'auteur conserve la propriété du droit d'auteur qui protège sa thèse. Ni la thèse ni des extraits substantiels de celle-ci ne doivent être imprimés ou autrement reproduits sans son autorisation.

ISBN 0-612-18224-X

Canada

University of Alberta

Library Release Form

Name of Author: Frank Brian Voogd

Title of Thesis: Parental Involvement in Decision Making in Independent Schools

Degree: Master of Education

Year this Degree Granted: 1996

Permission is hereby granted to the University of Alberta Library to reproduce single copies of this thesis and to lend or sell such copies for private, scholarly, or scientific research purposes only.

The author reserves all other publication and other rights in association with the copyright in the thesis, and except as hereinbefore provided, neither the thesis or any substantial portion thereof may be printed or otherwise reproduced in any material form whatever without the author's prior written permission.

Frank Voogd

4803 Olson Avenue
Terrace, BC
V8G 2A5

Date: Oct 2 1996

University of Alberta

Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research

The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research for acceptance, a thesis entitled *Parental Involvement in Decision Making in Independent Schools* submitted by Frank Voogd in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Education

Dr. F. Peters

Dr. C. Montgomerie

Dr. J. Parsons

Date: Sep. 16 1996

Abstract

This thesis examines the nature and extent of parental involvement in decision making in independent (private) Christian schools in Alberta. The literature reviewed examined school councils in public schools with a specific focus on the Chicago School Reform Act (1988). This Act legislated Local School Councils and gave them significant authority in decision making. The governance of the independent Christian schools had similar characteristics along with unique aspects.

The findings of this study were based on a synthesis of the data obtained from documents provided by the four independent Christian school societies and from eight semi-structured interviews with four principals and four Board Chairpersons of the school societies.

Parents in the independent Christian schools studied have the opportunity for direct involvement in decision making areas such as budgets, building plans, and the election of board members. They have representative involvement through their elected board members and the members of committees appointed by the board. The proportion of parents involved on the boards or their committees is significant.

Communication, trust, and a sense of ownership among parents, board members, and school personnel are important areas to develop and maintain. The principal is a key individual in the functioning of the school organization.

Acknowledgements

Researching and writing a thesis involves the work and efforts of many more people besides the author. I would like to thank those that volunteered their time, resources and thoughts as respondents in the interviews. I would like to thank Dr. Frank Peters for his guidance and work in encouraging me in the completion of this thesis. His insights, suggestions, and humour came at the right times. Thank you to the other committee members, Dr. Craig Montgomerie and Dr. Jim Parsons for the time spent in reading the thesis and discussing it at the defence. Their comments were appreciated and were thought provoking.

I would like to thank the Board of Centennial Christian School and the supporting community of Centennial Christian School for granting the time and support needed for the course work and research to complete this thesis and my master's degree.

Finally, I would like to thank my wife, JoAnne and my children, Nathan, Justin, Bryce, Leanne, and Krista for their love and support. I greatly appreciated their love, patience, and understanding as I worked to complete the thesis in the summers available.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER 1 1

SETTING THE STAGE 1

Introduction 1

Statement of Research Problem 2

Sub Problems and Research Questions 2

Explanation of Terms 3

Delimitations and Limitations 4

Limitations 4

Delimitations 4

Significance of this Study 5

CHAPTER 2 7

LITERATURE REVIEW 7

Part One - School Councils / Parental Involvement in Schools 7

Introduction 7

Importance of Parental Involvement / School Councils 8

Chicago School Reform 11

The Chicago School Reform Act 12

Formation of Local School Councils 12

Principals' Authority 13

Initial Effects of the Reform 13

Governance Styles of Local School Councils 15

Limited governance 15

Moderate governance 15

Balanced governance 16
Excessive governance 16
Summary 16
Parental Involvement and the Role of the Principal 17
School Councils / Site-based Management 20
School Councils in Alberta and British Columbia 21
School Councils / Independent School Boards 24
Summary 26
Part Two - Christian Schools - Belief and Governance 27
Introduction 27
Historical Background 27
World View 29
Introduction 29
World View and Related Concepts in Literature 30
Christian World Views 32
Church against the world 32
Church and world in paradox 32
Church transforming the world 33
Summary 34
Faith and Governance 35
Introduction 35
Authority in Governance 35
Collegiality and Accountability 36
Vision to Action 37

CHAPTER 3 40

METHODOLOGY 40
Introduction 40
Type of Study 40

Sample 41
Data Collection 42
Data Analysis 43
Background/Role of the Researcher 43
Limitations 44
Delimitations 44
Validity 44

CHAPTER 4 46

PRESENTATION OF DATA 46
Introduction 46
School Society Documents 46
General Organization 47
Constitutions 50
Membership 51
Vision Statements 52
General and Special Society Meetings 52
Board of Directors 54
Composition of the Board 54
Duties of the Board 55
Common elements 55
Unique elements 55
Board Meetings 57
Committees of the Board 57
Number and Composition 57
Committee Meetings 58
Duties of the Committees 59
Parent Representation on the Board and Committees 60
Principal Interviews Data 63

How Parents are Involved 63
Board and Committees 63
General and Special School Society Meetings 65
Financial Decisions 65
Curricular decisions 66
Program decisions 67
Communication 67
Perceptions 68
Parents 68
Principals 69
Benefits, Drawbacks, and Problems 70
How Parents Should Not be Involved In Decision Making 71
School Societies' Beliefs 72
Board Chairperson Interviews Data 73
How Parents are Involved 74
Board and Committees 74
General and Special School Society Meetings 77
Financial decisions 77
Curricular decisions 78
Operations decisions 79
Perceptions 79
Benefits, Drawbacks, and Problems 81
How Parents Should Not be Involved In Decision Making 83
School Societies' Beliefs 84

CHAPTER 5 86

SYNTHESIS OF DATA 86
Introduction 86
How Parents are Involved 86

Direct Involvement - General and Special Society Meetings ... 87
General Society Meetings ... 87
Special Society Meetings ... 88
Representative Involvement - Boards and Committees ... 89
Other Avenues for Involvement ... 92
Confidence, Trust, Ownership ... 92
Communication ... 93
Perceptions ... 94
Benefits ... 96
Problems and Concerns ... 98
Principals ... 98
Board Chairpersons ... 99
Role of the Principal ... 100
Selection and Importance ... 100
Authority of the Principal ... 101
Reflections of School Societies' Beliefs ... 102

CHAPTER 6 ... 103

SUMMARY, REFLECTIONS, AND IMPLICATIONS ... 103
Introduction ... 103
Summary ... 103
Purpose of the Study ... 103
Research Design ... 104
Major Findings from the Data ... 105
Reflections ... 107
Comparison with the Literature ... 107
Significant Involvement ... 107
Governance Styles ... 109
Organizational Structure ... 110

Further Reflections 111
Implications and Recommendations for Practice 111
Areas for Further Research 113
Concluding Remarks 113

References 115

Appendix A 120

Appendix B 128

Appendix C 130

List of Tables

4-1 Board Committees 58

4-2 Number of Members on the Board and Committees 62

List of Figures

4-1 Typical Organizational Framework of School Society 47

CHAPTER 1
SETTING THE STAGE

Introduction

Schools are communities made up of parents, students, teachers, administrators, and supporters. All stakeholders have valuable contributions to make to schools and have some part in the decision making process that determines the schools' programs and operations. Parental and community involvement at the local school level has recently been the focus of much attention in the schools, the media, and at government levels.

Parental input and involvement in education are desirable and can have a positive impact in schools. Roland Barth, in his book Improving Schools From Within (1990), points to parents as one important factor in the improvement of schools. Barth (1990) states "this book is addressed to teachers, parents, and principals who want to, can, and must assume responsibility for getting their own schoolhouses in order" (p. xiv). Parental involvement in decision making develops a sense of ownership in the school. Key members of the community should be involved in the strategic planning process in public education (Dlugosh, 1993). I believe this extends to independent schools as well.

Parental involvement in decision making is desirable. It is of value to identify governance structures in the school setting that allow and encourage parents to be part of the decision making process of the school. It would be beneficial to investigate how principals, as key members of the school community, support or impede the development of parental involvement. In public schools the opportunities for parental involvement in decision making are available. In parent run, independent schools, parental involvement in decision making is a reality.

In this thesis I have studied four independent Christian schools in Alberta that are members of Christian Schools International. The thesis is organized into six chapters. Included in Chapter One are: (a) the research problem and sub problems, (b) definitions for the terms used, (c) the limitations and delimitations of the research, and (d) the significance of the study. Chapter Two provides an extensive review of related literature. Parental involvement in schools is considered along with school councils, focusing on the Chicago School Reform. The role of the principal in relation to parental involvement is explored. A section on the background of independent Christian schools of the type researched in this study is presented. The second part of the literature reviewed focuses on Christian schools and their beliefs and governance. Chapter Three describes the research design used in this study. The findings of the research are presented in Chapter Four. The data are organized and presented according to the following divisions: documents, principal interviews, and Board Chairperson interviews. Chapter Five presents a synthesis of the data. In Chapter Six the information from the literature review is related to the findings and the major themes that arose from the data are presented. Implications and recommendations resulting from the study are discussed.

Statement of Research Problem

The purpose of this study is to find answers to the following question: What is the nature and extent of parental involvement in decision making in independent Christian schools?

Sub Problems and Research Questions

A number of more specific questions served as guides to the study and gave focus to the collection and analysis of the data. The questions are as follows:

1. What governance structures are in place to allow parents the opportunity for input and involvement in curriculum changes?
2. What governance structures are in place to allow parents the opportunity for input and involvement in the general operations of the school?
3. How do the governance structures encourage or discourage parents from becoming involved in the decision making process in the school?
4. How do principals encourage or discourage parental involvement in decision making?
5. How do principals view increased parental involvement in decision making?
6. What are the parents' perceptions as to their involvement in the school decision making process and the benefits to the school of the involvement?
7. How do parents perceive the principal's role in encouraging or discouraging parental involvement in decision making?
8. How do teachers view parental involvement in decision making?

Explanation of Terms

The following terms are explained to provide consistency of usage throughout the study. They are arranged alphabetically.

- curriculum changes -- addition, revision, or deletion of curriculum.
- decision making -- authority to vote on changes, hire staff, initiate new programs, decide direction
- general operations -- school day, hours of operation, playground rules, placement of students.
- governance structures -- school society, board, committees, policies, procedures, and practices

- independent schools -- in this study, parent run or parent controlled Christian schools that historically operate from a Calvinistic, reformed background.
- parental involvement -- membership on decision making bodies such as the board and committees where advice, input, influence, and decisions are exercised and made.
- school board -- an elected body that operates the school(s) on behalf of the parents.

Delimitations and Limitations

Limitations

The data collection from the respondents in the interviews was limited by their willingness to be open and frank and their ability to recall events and experiences. This was overcome to a certain degree by discussing the intent of the research indicating that responses would not reflect back on their school. Respondents were also aware of my own background and experience with schools such as theirs in Alberta and British Columbia. This familiarity added to a climate of trust and understanding during the interview; the respondents felt they were talking to someone who would understand them.

My biases as researcher and interviewer could also place limitations on the data collected in interviews. Using a standard interview guide addresses some of this concern. Further steps taken to address this area are described in Chapter Three - Methodology.

Delimitations

The research was made manageable by limiting the schools studied to the geographical area of central Alberta within an approximate radius of 200 kilometres of Edmonton. The number of interviews was limited to eight. In the

four schools chosen the principal and Board Chairperson or representative were interviewed.

Significance of this Study

Changes in public education are moving in the direction of increased parental involvement in the local school. The establishment of School Councils and guidelines for their operation has been incorporated into provincial School Acts. A study exploring the nature and extent of parental involvement is timely. The literature on parental involvement in areas such as school councils comes from various sources in public education in Canada and the United States. The information gathered may guide parents and educators in public schools to make informed decisions in the future as changes in school governance are anticipated. Parents and educators will find the literature and this research useful as they face issues of defining and implementing parental involvement. This study may cause the stakeholders to consider the effects of parental involvement and influence the stakeholders to make choices at their local school to increase parental involvement. Each school community is unique and its members make decisions about what will be effective for their school. Each school community has the opportunity to learn from others and consider the factors and problems that may be encountered in developing parental involvement in school councils or other areas of governance.

This research will be useful particularly to independent Christian schools in Canada as they face similar changes in education as their public counterparts. Through the research, practices and policies are clarified and background knowledge is provided which can assist administrators and boards as they review parental involvement in decision making. The themes identified in this study will help in understanding the nature of the relationships that encourage parental involvement.

All schools, both independent and public, have common aspects to their organizations. They all have parents who are interested in the education their children receive. In the present climate of change, public and independent schools may also look to the themes presented and draw valuable information from this source.

CHAPTER 2
LITERATURE REVIEW

Part One - School Councils / Parental Involvement in Schools

Introduction

Schools are communities made up of parents, students, teachers, administrators, and supporters. Each stakeholder has valuable contributions to make to the school and has a role in the decision making process of the school. What role parents have in the decision making can vary greatly among schools.

This review of literature explores areas related to the involvement of parents in decision making. The first part looks at school councils and parental involvement in decision making according to the topics that follow. Research has recognized (a) the importance of parental involvement on the improvement and effectiveness of schools. Studies related to school councils are reviewed with a specific focus on (b) the Chicago School Reform experiences where the establishment of school councils was mandated. Further research identifies (c) the relationship between school councils and principals and the influence each has on the other. Additional literature addresses the connection between (d) school councils and site-based management. A description is given of (e) school councils in Alberta and British Columbia and the possible changes to occur. The last section of part one focuses on (f) school councils in public schools and the operation of boards in independent schools. A (g) summary concludes part one.

Part two of the literature review is a brief, historical background of the type of independent Christian schools upon which this study is based. Included is a section on world view and a section on the link between faith and governance.

Importance of Parental Involvement / School Councils

The need for educational reform and improvement of schools has received much media attention in North America. In identifying the causes of poor performance of schools, researchers have pointed to the lack of parental involvement and input in the school (Barth, 1990, preface xii). Education and schools have experienced increased bureaucratization and centralization of decision making which has muffled the voice of parents at the local school level. Parents have been alienated from the school resulting in a loss of ownership of the school and its purposes or direction.

Seeley (1985) notes that efforts are under way to reintroduce the voice of parents into education at all levels of the school system (p. 73). He recognizes a return to a democratic model where schools embody the will of the people and not the will of the government. Barth (1990) notes that parents are an important factor in improving schools and must assume the responsibility for improvement along with teachers and principals (p. xiv). Dlugosh (1993) adds that key members of the community should be involved in the strategic planning process in education (p. 63). Parental involvement in decision making develops a sense of ownership in the school.

The need for shared decision making involving parents is also supported by Hansen and Marburger (1989). Hansen and Marburger have written a manual for training school councils that is the third in a series of publications on school based improvement by the National Committee for Citizens in Education (NCCE). The NCCE's goal is to assist schools and districts in training stakeholders for school based improvement. The NCCE states that parents are important contributors to the education of their children. Parents can be trusted and are interested in their children's education. Change and improvement can come from the resources that are already in the school community. The NCCE finds support for its beliefs in the research of John Chubb that showed:

- The more control a school has over the aspects of its organization that affect its performance -- the articulation of its goals, the selection and management of its personnel, the specification of its policies -- the more likely the school is to exhibit the qualities that have been found to promote effectiveness.
- Teachers who feel they are influential in decisions are more innovative and more likely to share their ideas with other teachers.
- Students who view their parents as supporting the school have higher self esteem and more positive attitudes toward school.
- Parent involvement in their children's schools is directly related to student achievement.
- Parent satisfaction with schools is positively related to parent participation and influence in decision making. (Hansen and Marburger, 1989, p. 5)

Marsh, (1988) states that the more interest groups involved in education, the greater the chance that all student interests will be taken into account. Marsh also stated that increased support for education is more likely to come from parents who are well informed. When parents experience the complexities of the learning process and its frustrations they are more understanding and supportive of the role of education.

Lyons, Robbins, and Smith (1982) have developed a handbook called Involving Parents: A Handbook for Participation in Schools. The book was written as an accompanying volume to the report on an extensive study done by the U.S. Office of Education from 1978 through 1982 (p. vii). One of the general conclusions from the study noted that "where parental involvement flourished, there were observable benefits for students, parents, and staff. There was no evidence of harm from parental involvement" (p. ix). The handbook identifies a range of parental involvement activities that are grouped in six categories each focusing on a different part of the educational field. They include aspects such as building relationships, working with students at school or at home, working with teachers, raising funds and support, educating parents, and forming advisory groups.

The advisory groups allow parents input into the governance of the school and involves them in the decision making process. Lyons et al. (1982) clarify what makes a parent advisory group effective or what is successful involvement. For involvement to be successful the parent advisory group must be active in significant school related areas. The involvement must occur regularly and it must have impact (p. 80). This implies that successful involvement will not occur when parents feel their input is not heeded or is dismissed by those in administration. If their role is seen as token or figurative, parents become disillusioned and little impact occurs in the school. This appears to be consistent with studies related to school councils.

School councils have been established to promote or reintroduce parental input in decision making. Education has gone through a stage of bureaucratization with an emphasis on the input from the professionals-researchers, teachers, principals, superintendents, and government officials. Seeley (1985) states this development was seen as practical, efficient, and logical but was unresponsive to the people in many communities (p. 14). Hewitson (1992), in a paper presented at the 1992 National Conference of the Australian Council for Educational Administration, identifies similar concerns in his experiences in Australia. He states:

> The prevailing attitude has been that it is up to government to provide adequate schooling facilities across the country. Over the last decade or two, however, greater recognition has emerged, first, of the non-democratic nature of highly centralised, bureaucratic government school systems and, second, of the rights and desires of parents, employers and the community generally to influence significant decisions about schooling more directly through elected parliamentary representatives. The establishment of School Councils as one outcome of the devolution of decision making to the local school level continues the tradition of lay persons having considerable sway over schooling. (p. 7)

The Chicago School Reform Act of 1988 addressed the continued development of parental rights in decision making. The act established a new

governance structure based on the principle that parents, because of their vital interests in schools, should have firm control and power in deciding how to best meet the students' educational needs (Bacchus & Marchiafava, 1991, p. 1). The Chicago School Reform Act of 1988 established that each school was to elect a Local School Council. The Local School Council was given substantial powers in decision making.

Hansen and Marburger (1989), in their manual for training school councils, recognize that restructuring is occurring in many school districts and parents are gaining authority in decision making at the local school level (p. 3). They identify two essential ingredients in school based improvement. The first is a sharing of authority and power in the form of political decentralization without layers of intermediate steps blocking the way. This decreases the bureaucracy . Second, the authority given to the school through decentralization must result in shared decision making at the school level involving parents, staff, community, and students (p. 4). School councils are an answer to the demands by parents and educators for greater involvement. We can look to the Chicago School Reform experiences for evidence on how school councils have functioned.

Chicago School Reform

The Chicago school reform was initiated in response to the poor educational conditions which existed in the school system. Bacchus and Marchiafava (1991) outline several conditions that limited the effectiveness of the schools in Chicago. They indicated that the school system suffered under frequent teacher strikes. On standardized tests, 75% of the students were below the national average. The high school drop out rate was 50%. Students that did graduate from the system were not well prepared for the work force and most could not qualify to go on to higher education. The conditions called for reform. School councils were an important part of the Chicago school reform of 1989. This section on the Chicago school reform examines:

(a) The Chicago School Reform Act
(b) Formation of School Councils
(c) Principals' Authority
(d) Initial Effects of the Reform
(e) Governance Styles of Local School Councils

The Chicago School Reform Act

The Chicago School Reform Act (1988) (P.A. 85-1418) implemented in 1989, consisted of three major provisions. The first provision was a set of five year goals established to have Chicago students (a) achieving at national norms on standardized tests, (b) attending schools at comparable rates to other districts, and (c) graduating from high school in similar proportions to peers in other states. The second provision provided for a reduction in administrative costs and an equitable redistribution of system resources to the school level. The third provision mandated the establishment of a Local School Council at every school and that this be the primary governance unit of the school system (Hess, 1992, pp. 161-162). This third provision focused on shifting governance from a central board (bureaucratic educational jurisdiction) to the school level (local educational unit).

Formation of Local School Councils

The Chicago School Reform Act (1988) established the membership and the mandate of the Local School Council (LSCs). The LSCs were to consist of six parents (elected by the parents), two community members (elected by community residents), two teachers (elected by the school staff), and the principal. The LSCs were given major, broad powers in the school. The Councils were to adopt a school improvement plan and approve and adopt a school budget. The LSCs were responsible for selecting a principal who would be hired under a four year contract (Hess, 1992, p. 162). Additionally, the LSCs could give advice on textbook selection, discipline and attendance policies, and

staff allocations and appointments. Clearly, the authority and role of the LSC were not token or figurative.

Principals' Authority

The authority and responsibilities of the principals were revised. The principals were given authority over staff in the school. They had the freedom to fill vacancies and new positions without considering the seniority of applicants in the system. Teachers, whose performance and service was considered unsatisfactory, could be dismissed after 45 days providing the teacher had been placed on probation and remedial help had been provided. The principals were responsible for ensuring that the schools' improvement plan was developed. The improvement plan was to be approved by the LSCs and then implemented by the principal. The principal was to work with the school staff in developing the content and methods of the school's curriculum within the guidelines of the school improvement plan (Clinchy, 1989, pp. 41-42).

Initial Effects of the Reform

Upon implementation of the Chicago School Reform Act (1988), LSCs were elected and the public response was positive (Bacchus & Marchiafava, 1991, p. 2). In the first year many LSCs were frustrated with the need to make critical decisions so quickly but responsibilities were carried out well. It was clear that the governance structure was working (p. 5). Within the first years several accomplishments were noted. Fresh ideas and enthusiasm came in to the schools with the parents elected to the councils. Decision making was done cooperatively between school staff, community members, and parents which led to further cooperation in other school activities. "There is a new optimism about the schools: large numbers of people believe the reform can work. As parents come to believe in education, so will their children, who will be better motivated to succeed in school" (p. 5-6).

Hess and Easton (1991), in addition to noting positive developments with the establishment of LSC, also identified problems that arose. The LSCs experienced frustrations in exercising their new authority. Decisions made by the Board of Education and its administration had impact on the LSCs exercising their new authority. Sustaining the initial enthusiasm and interest was challenging. There was a need to clarify and set up rules to determine how future decisions that affected LSCs would be made (p. 22). Yet, a willingness was shown by the various constituents to work together collaboratively on behalf of their schools (p. 23).

The Chicago School Reform was not without legal challenges. Principals are the one identifiable group most affected by the implementation of the reforms. As noted previously, the LSCs were given authority to select and evaluate principals who would be hired under a four year contract. The Chicago Principals' Association brought a legal challenge before the courts on this matter.

The legal suit challenged the Chicago School Reform Act (1988) (P.A. 85-1418) on two counts. First, the Association stated that the Act was unconstitutional based on the manner in which the LSCs were elected. Second, the principals maintained that the Act, which gave authority to terminate principals, violated the rights of tenure (Hess and Easton, 1991, p. 6). On November 30, 1990, the Illinois Supreme Court handed down its ruling.

The court ruled that the method of electing members to the LSCs violated the rule of one person, one vote and therefore was unconstitutional. Because the LSCs were such an integral part of the whole Act, the court declared the entire Chicago School Reform Act (1988) unconstitutional. However, the Supreme Court then went on to say that corrective measures could be taken which would settle the matter of the electing process (Hess and Easton, 1991, p. 6). This implied that the route was open to maintain the essence of the Act through new legislation. On January 8, 1991, the Illinois General Assembly

reenacted the main provisions of the Chicago School Reform Act (1988) (P.A. 85-1418) giving it a new number, (P.A. 86-1477) (p.6).

Although the Chicago School Reform Act (1988) was declared unconstitutional, the Supreme Court decided to pass judgement on the issue of tenure while it was before the court to avoid a new court case at a later date. The court ruled that tenure was granted by state statute and was not incorporated into the contracts. Therefore, tenure could be removed by state statute and the right to terminate was upheld (Hess and Easton, 1991, pp. 6-7).

Governance Styles of Local School Councils

In the third year of the Chicago School Reform a study of LSCs was undertaken. John Easton et al. (1993) randomly selected 14 schools for the study and council meeting observers visited 155 school councils meetings. Formal and informal interviews were held with LSC chairpersons, principals, and other key members. Easton et al. (1993) identified and described four approaches that LSCs took in their school governance. He named the governance styles limited governance, moderate governance, balanced governance, and excessive governance.

Limited governance. LSCs in this group were classified as having low member participation. The councils provided little leadership and were controlled and dominated by the school principals. Information provided to the school councils was limited. The LSCs members trusted the professionals and left most decisions to them. The LSCs remained an unused resource.

Moderate governance. This style of governance was seen as most typical among the LSCs. Principals tended to lead the LSCs and the councils were not active leaders of their schools. An exception to this occurred in crisis situations. When the relationship between the parents and school professionals was good;

parents had trust in the principals. The councils generally approved ideas presented by the principals and teachers.

Balanced governance. The third style of governance was shown by LSCs that functioned as leaders in their schools. Leadership within the LSCs was shared by the principals and the council chairpersons with other council members playing a vital role. Information was freely shared and in-depth discussions were held before making decisions. Easton et al. (1993) felt this approach was better than the others; it was productive and efficient in decision making.

Excessive governance. LSCs classified as having excessive governance were very active and had high participation rates. The council leaders were chairpersons. The councils and their principals did not have a cooperative relationship and there was a lack of trust among the members of the councils. While there was generally much discussion at meetings, it was not very productive. LSCs members felt they were not always given enough information and the members tended to represent factions.

Easton et al. (1993) promoted the balanced governance approach. "Balanced governance, a governing style that requires shared leadership, mutual respect, and a strong commitment from all LSC members, describes those councils that have assumed the most effective roles in school policy making" (Easton et al., p. 6).

Summary

School based management is firmly rooted in the Chicago schools. Although imperfections in the organizational models do surface, there has been meaningful involvement of parents and community in their schools (Glass, 1991, p. 42). There is recognition that the process has not occurred without hardship

and stress. Ayers (1991) states that LSCs have shown their inexperience and lack of vision and often decisions reflect commonplace solutions. The insistence on parental control has caused some alienation of teachers (p. 70). Parental involvement has had impact on the administrators. Principals saw their own roles redefined with increased demands on their time to work with LSCs. The principals dealt with infringements upon their own authority (Hess & Easton, 1991). Principals play a significant role in schools and are affected greatly by any changes in governance. Some have found experiences to be positive and some have seen the changes as primarily negative.

Despite the criticisms and lawsuits, the LSCs are running in a generally positive manner. Bacchus and Marchiafava (1991) note the benefit of increased involvement of parents and community with the professional staff of the schools. Ayers (1991) also concludes that the involvement of parents is positive. "The fact that 6000 citizens are convening regularly and focusing their energies on the schools is a positive thing" (p. 71).

Parental Involvement and the Role of the Principal

Principals are key members in school councils. Hess and Easton (1991) collected many responses from principals involved in the Chicago School Reform that pointed to positive developments. With the establishment of LSCs, principals sensed an increased flexibility and speed in decision making through the LSCs in contrast to the requiring of approval through the layers of bureaucracy. Principals also appreciated the power given to select staff for the schools. The overall increase in power at the local level was noted as being positive (p. 6-11). While principals noted the general benefits to the schools they also identified areas of negative impact on their roles.

Ford (1991) and Hess and Easton (1991) identify several negative responses from principals. Principals saw their role in the school expanded to include being an information provider and the leader of the LSCs. This change

in role demanded great increases in time required of the principal which was reflected in decreased time spent in supervision and contact with staff. Principals worried about LSCs members exceeding their authority with the realization that ultimately, responsibility came back to the principals. Several principals recognized the increased involvement through collaborative efforts but had concerns with the efficiency of such procedures. A general feeling of the principals centered on the apparent increase in responsibility and demands of their time without increase in administrative time, help, and salary.

In Charting Reform: The Principals' Perspective Bennet et al. (1992) share the results of a thorough survey which reflects the input of 83% of the Chicago elementary and high school principals. In general, principals were quite positive about the school reform and the impact it had on their schools. Although recognizing the positive development for schools, principals related a contrasting view when sharing their personal feelings about the impact on their work. Bennet et al. state:

> There is one discordant note, however. Only 41% of the principals report feeling better about working in their schools since reform. Although a large proportion of principals express optimism about their schools, this is not always accompanied by personal good feelings. These responses signal a general theme running throughout this report--principals report many positive developments in Chicago's schools, but their work, and their role have become much more difficult. (p. 3).

Principals' views on local school governance were positive. They felt "that their LSCs grant them sufficient autonomy to do their jobs and respect the principals' views about how things should be done in the school" (Bennet et al., 1992, p. 4). With respect to the process for evaluation of principals, 60% reported that the procedures employed by the LSCs were fair and objective. 24% responded neutrally and 17% responded negatively to the same issue. Fewer than 40%, however, reported that the evaluations done by the LSC provided constructive suggestions (p. 5). The research indicates that principals

acknowledge the positive developments resulting from the Chicago School Reform but, as key members in the educational community, they have experienced an increased workload and demands on time which has caused a decrease in job satisfaction.

Other literature, not based on the Chicago School Reform, adds further insights into parent involvement and role of the principal. Hewitson (1992) relates changes that occurred in Australian schools with the establishment of School Councils. Hewitson compiled the work of several researchers and notes that with the coming of school councils, principals must work with decision makers who may have different values. The principal is also likely to experience frustration as a coordinator of people with differing views that cause conflicts as they make decisions together (p. 7). Hewitson (1992) cautions that principals must beware of responding by dominating the school council and running the show while giving appearances that shared decision making is taking place. This would prevent the community participation from being effective and democratic (p. 8).

Foster (1984) indicated similar concerns. She surveyed principals in South Carolina, where school councils are required by law, and in Maryland where there was no mandate for school councils. Based on her findings, Foster felt that the principal has the main contact with the advisory council and it is the principal's attitude that determines the effectiveness of the council. Foster asserts that more often than not, that attitude is negative. This was true for principals from both states. Principals tend to steer the councils in the direction they have determined. Still, there have been successes where the principal has been a facilitator and the council functions as decision makers in school governance (p. 26-29). A positive relationship between the principal and the school council is needed in order for parent involvement to be effective.

School Councils / Site-based Management

Site-based management is a management style often discussed and developed when school councils take a greater role in decision making at the local school level. The Chicago School Reform initiatives clearly put more emphasis on management at the local school level and place the authority for decision making with the Local School Councils. The Edmonton Public School System has also developed a model for site-based management.

In the Edmonton Public School System model individual schools were given decision making financial authority in areas such as school supplies, equipment, personnel, maintenance, and utilities (Brown, 1990 pp. 146,150). While the authority is given to the school it is important to consider how the decision making will be carried out and whether the decisions are made by the principal alone or in a collaborative process with the parents. To gain the benefits of increased parental involvement, a collaborative decision making process is needed but these types of procedures can be inefficient and cause delays (Neal, 1991). One Edmonton principal noted that "while an administrator with good collaborative, leadership skills could have a tremendously positive effect on a school, an administrator with poor skills could have a devastating effect on a school" (Miller, 1995, p. 18).

If site-based management is implemented giving parents a significant role in a collaborative decision making process there can be great benefits. The parents and educators in local schools would have increased flexibility to meet the requirements of the students. Brown (1990) identifies the importance of this by stating:

> When people are allowed to make decisions and are held accountable for those decisions, they tend to be much more analytical and responsible in making those decisions and will strive to make those decisions work.... When teachers, students, parents and principals feel they "own" their schools, benefit from their wise decisions, and suffer from their unwise decisions, there is great potential to build a good school. (p. 10)

This is supported by Fullan (1991) in his comments about one particular group of stakeholders, the parents and community. Fullan's remarks are based on a 1988 study by Wilson and Coran of 571 secondary schools.

> First, collaborative links with the community strengthen the technical aspects of the school.... Second, strong community involvement makes schools more accessible and attractive places and builds political support.... Third, participation in school activities by adults other than school staff communicates an important message to students.... Finally, collaborative activities shape the school community culture that encourages a sense of concern about the quality of life that is so often missing in today's harried world. (p. 241)

Site-based management models can make positive contributions to increasing parental involvement in decision making. Miller (1995) emphasizes several points that need to be kept in mind.

> First... the quality of the educational experiences offered to the students must be a priority.... A second point to remember is that any management style should be measured for what it accomplishes and not for what it is.... A third consideration is ... there are a considerable number of common characteristics between schools using site-based management and effective schools. (p. 23)

Miller points out that in the present educational climate we are faced with several realities. Schools will need to be economically responsible and involve parents in school decisions. There is always the need to improve the educational experiences of students. It is important to increase public support for education (p. 24). Site-based management can be an important part of the solution to increasing parental involvement and satisfaction in the schools.

School Councils in Alberta and British Columbia

The role of School Councils in public and separate schools in Alberta has recently undergone dramatic changes. Prior to the changes, Section 17(1) and 17(2) of the Alberta School Act (1988) stated that parents may establish a school council whose majority membership must be parents of students attending the

school where the council is established. The school council may function only in an advisory role to the principal and the board unless the board specifically delegates duties and responsibilities to the council. The responsibilities that may be assigned are found in Section 45 of the Alberta School Act (1988) and several exceptions are noted. The board may not delegate the following to the school council: (a) making bylaws for the school, (b) closing the school, (c) requisitioning money from a municipality, (d) terminating services of a teacher, and (e) holding a hearing.

In June of 1995, Alberta Education released a publication entitled School Councils Handbook - Meaningful Involvement for the School Community. The Handbook was the result of a government initiative to bring about changes in education through a process of *Education Roundtable* discussions held in the fall of 1993 and through a consultation process led by the *Task Force on Roles and Responsibilities* in the spring of 1994. The Handbook included a section on the establishment of School Councils based on changes in the School Act and the development of School Council Regulations.

Section 17 of the Alberta School Act (1995) now states that "a school council shall be established in accordance with the regulations for each school operated by a board. The majority of the members of the school council shall be parents of students enrolled in the school". The regulations accompanying the School Act state that each school must hold an establishment meeting no later than February 15, 1996. The role of the school councils is summarized in the Handbook (Alberta Education, 1995). *What do school councils do?*

> Each school operated by a board must provide for the establishment of a school council. The majority of members of a school council must be parents of students attending the school. The school council may, at its own discretion, advise the principal and the board respecting any matter relating to the school. The school council may, at its own discretion, consult with the principal who ensures that students have the opportunity to meet educational standards and that the fiscal management of the school is in accordance with board requirements.

> School councils facilitate the development of a common vision for the school. Members work together on school councils to facilitate communication, planning and resource allocation regarding priorities and programs that are needed to meet the expectations of the local school community. School councils do not manage the day-to-day operations of the school.
>
> Once established, school councils should be able to look beyond the needs of a particular school and cooperate with other school councils in sharing information and ideas and in providing advice and information to school boards and Alberta Education. (p. 13)

School councils in Alberta must be established by law. The legislation and regulations were intended to significantly increase the role of school councils within the local school. Yet, the role of the school council remains primarily advisory to the principal and the board. This suggests that little change has occurred. The board may delegate duties and functions to the school council. This is in contrast to the LSCs in Chicago who have their authority and responsibility established by statute. In Alberta, school councils must be established and appear to have a more significant, advisory role than in the past but, the effectiveness of the school councils remains to be seen. It may be that their effectiveness in governance and decision making is limited.

In British Columbia the school councils are not mandatory. Section 8 of the British Columbia School Act (1989) lists the guidelines for Parents' Advisory Councils (PAC). The PACs are optional and are not required by statute but may be requested by parents. Section 8(2) states that upon application and the request of parents of the school, the board or minister shall establish a PAC. The PAC is strictly advisory and there is no provision for the PAC to be given defined authority and responsibility. It has been my observation that councils or committees that have no authority are seldom effective. There are exceptions and some may operate well in schools where a climate of trust and mutual decision making has been established.

Public education in Alberta and British Columbia is being questioned as to its effectiveness and responsiveness to the people. Hatton (1993), in her article Restore public schools to the people, reports on the views of Mr. Nikiforuk who suggests that public education must be put back into the hands of the parents and community (p. 34). The community's influence and authority must be restored. Schools should be run by a community board with the authority of the centralized school districts in local school governance diminished (p. 35). Perhaps the model of the Chicago School Reform Act (1988) or the examples of independent schools may be considered as changes come about in Alberta and British Columbia. Alberta has made some moves in the direction of increased parental involvement in the schools as evidenced by the changes in the School Act (1995) and the accompanying regulations regarding school councils.

School Councils / Independent School Boards

The research cited deals with parental involvement and school councils in the public sector of education. Independent or private schools tend not to be grouped in large districts and usually are associated with a defined community or membership. Erickson (1979) notes that patrons of privately supported schools are usually associated with the school by choice and have some mutual commitment to the school (p. 40-41). This would suggest that there would be more opportunity, necessity, and desire for parental involvement in the school.

Parent-run or controlled independent schools often have an elected Board that governs the school(s) (usually only one school) on behalf of the parents. The activities and responsibilities of the Board parallel those of the school councils described earlier. An independent school Board prepares and adopts a budget for presentation to the school society or membership. The Board determines the programs and direction of the school, either directly or through the work of committees. The Board is actively involved in the selection of an administrator or principal for the school and evaluates that person's

performance. School governance lies at the level where parent representation and input are great. The operation of the school includes many of the elements of site-based management that larger public school boards are now beginning to use.

The Board is responsible to the parents that have elected the members and no centralized authority has jurisdiction over the board other than state or provincial education department representatives who are not involved in the day-to-day operations of the school. In this sense the school functions in a democratic manner, representing the will of the people, who in the case of independent schools, have common goals and purposes. Independent schools may belong to larger collective organizations for purposes of lobbying government. In Alberta the Association of Independent Schools and Colleges represents many independent schools. In British Columbia this role is performed by the Federation of Independent Schools Association. Independent Christian schools may also join organizations for sharing resources, development of curriculum, and professional development. These collective organizations function in support or advisory roles and are not involved in the direct governance of the school.

In many respects these school governance systems appear to be remarkably similar to those described in the Chicago School Reform experiences. The Board and staff have a high degree of accountability to the parents that they represent. As a principal, I have also experienced similar attitudes and views as described by the principals surveyed in Chicago; views that are both positive and negative. The negative views and concerns do not relate to parental involvement and the benefits to the school but revolve more around the time commitments, workload, and added responsibilities to the position of principalship. The parental involvement, in my view, is without doubt positive and desired.

Independent schools represent a model "closer to the democracy of the public schools in the days of Horace Mann than does the typical modern public school" (Seeley, 1985, p. 72). Seeley (1985) states that parochial schools are more responsive to parental wishes than are their public counterparts. As public education and schooling undergoes further scrutiny and criticism, perhaps the independent schools can offer a model or framework for the development of school councils in public schools.

Summary

Parental involvement is a vital and important ingredient for effective schools. School councils have been established as an avenue whereby parents can have influence and impact in the decision making processes of the school. School councils have had a measure of success as shown in the experiences of the Chicago School Reform. School councils in Chicago demonstrated different governance approaches with the balanced-governance approach appearing to be the most effective. The effectiveness of school councils depends on the authority and responsibilities given to them.

Principals are important figures in the areas of school councils and parent involvement in decision making. Principal involvement and support is necessary for shared decision making to be effective. A collaborative approach in decision making has positive effects. Independent schools have unique characteristics that provide opportunity for parental input and involvement. Their model for operating as a school, with parental involvement in governance, may provide insight for developments in public schools. Decentralization of authority and resources with increased parent control and involvement is on the horizon. Parents will be developing greater ownership of their schools and will be taking on increased responsibility for the education of their children. The site-based management model used by some public school districts offers some solutions for increasing parental involvement at the decision making level.

Part Two - Christian Schools - Belief and Governance

Introduction

Independent schools exist for a variety of reasons. Some are designed to meet the needs of students with particular requirements; schools for the hearing impaired or sight impaired are examples. Other independent schools espouse a particular method of instruction or philosophy of teaching such as Waldorf or Montessori schools. However, the vast majority of independent schools owe their existence to a commitment by their supporting communities to particular beliefs or faith assumptions (Hollaar, 1989) and of these schools, most subscribe to one common reference: the Bible. Hollaar states, "the Bible (has) themes evoking common consent; the Bible speaks clearly about doing justice, showing love, abstaining from revenge, protecting life, seeking the well-being of others, and about the sovereignty of God (and therefore the limited authority of all human powers that be). No quarter is left for religious neutrality" (pp. 4,5). The independent Christian schools researched in this study claim adherence to the Bible and base their existence and direction on their interpretation of Biblical principles.

This part of the literature reviewed explores the independent Christian schools researched. Included is a historical framework which explores and describes the origins of these Christian schools. This is followed by a description of world views and defines a world view which may be held by the schools and which guides the Christian schools in their governance and operations. A summary concludes this section on Christian schools.

Historical Background

The independent Christian schools researched in this study come from a Calvinistic/Reformed, Christian heritage. The word reformed references roots that go back to the time of the Reformation in the 15th and 16th centuries. The

names of Martin Luther, Ulrich Zwingli, and John Calvin are among the 'protestors' of the established church at that time. The development of a Calvinistic perspective in the Netherlands formed the seeds of the Reformed, Christian churches and the reformed outlook or world view of the members of those churches (explored in greater detail in a subsequent section). This reformed, Christian world view went through much change and development in the 18th and 19th centuries in the Netherlands. Adherents to this world view attempted to put their beliefs into practice within their country.

During the late 1800's and into the twentieth century there was much European emigration to North America. Many Reformed, Calvinistic immigrants came from the Netherlands and took with them their distinctive world view and beliefs. The desire to have Christian day schools was a reflection of their world view and this came to expression in the formation of organizations devoted to establishing and forming Calvinistic/Reformed, Christian schools. In Canada, the influx of more emigrants after World War II brought the people that shaped the present day Calvinistic/Reformed schools. Dr Lee Hollaar (1989) in Faith and Culture in School Governance gives an in-depth account of the historical development of the Calvinistic/Reformed Christian school movement. His work traces this development in the Netherlands from the time of the Reformation and outlines the work and thought of key individuals whose influence is evident in areas such as education.

The Canadian Christian schools of the Calvinistic/Reformed traditions joined an umbrella organization for Christian schools in Canada and the United States called the **National Union of Christian Schools** located in Grand Rapids, Michigan. This organization was begun in the United States before there were Calvinistic schools in Canada. In 1980 the name was changed to **Christian Schools International** (CSI), reflecting the presence of a number of Christian schools in Canada (Hollaar, 1989, p. 144). The majority of the Canadian, Calvinstic/Reformed schools are found in the provinces of Ontario,

Alberta, and British Columbia in the towns and cities to which there had been significant emigration of Dutch settlers. Each of these three provinces became a District in the umbrella organization of CSI. Alberta was known as District 11 and the schools used in this study have membership in this District.

In the school year 1993/94 there were fifteen school societies and Boards in Alberta with membership in CSI, District 11. There was a total of 20 schools; some Boards operated more than one school. Most of these schools had their roots in the Calvinistic/Reformed traditions but there are school societies that have formed more recently from a broader evangelical, Christian base. Many of the older, established schools have also become broader in their evangelical, Christian base and their parent and student membership goes much beyond the Dutch roots. Yet, all the schools have much in common in their world views, with historical ties to the Calvinistic/Reformed background which has shaped their world views which in turn also shapes the governance of their schools.

World View

Introduction

In order to understand the concept of world view and how it comes to expression in school governance practices it is appropriate to come to some understanding of what is meant by the term. It is also beneficial to explore how there are different Christian world views. A brief description of different Christian world views is provided here in relation to how the Christian church may function in the world. People holding certain world views will also have them come to expression when they work in such areas as education.

Most people acknowledge that we all have a particular set of thoughts or values upon which we base our decisions. Some refer to these values as our guiding principles. Others may equate a set of values with the term world view. Walsh and Middleton (1984) state that the concept of world view goes deeper

than a set of values or beliefs. Our world view shapes and determines our values and helps us interpret the world around us. World view is a vision of life and a vision for life that leads a person or a people in a particular way of life (p. 31-32). Walsh and Middleton (1984) state:

> A world view, then, provides a model *of the world* which guides its adherents *in the world*. It stipulates how the world ought to be, and it thus advises how its adherents ought to conduct themselves in the world. In a sense, each world view comes equipped with an eschatology, a vision of the future, which guides and directs life (p. 32).

World views are based on faith commitments and as people we all put our faith in something, be it science, humanity, God, our country, the happy life, or economics, or even a claim to no belief. Walsh and Middleton (1984) state that our faith commitment is based on or clarified by the way we answer four basic questions.

1. *Who am I?* Or, what is the nature, task and purpose of human beings?
2. *Where am I?* Or, what is the nature of the world and universe I live in?
3. *What's wrong?* Or, what is the basic problem or obstacle that keeps me from attaining fulfilment? In other words, how do I understand evil?
4. *What is the remedy?* Or, how is it possible to overcome this hindrance to my fulfilment? (p. 35)

<u>World View and Related Concepts in Literature</u>

Sergiovanni (1988) explores a similar notion of a faith commitment expressed in a world view although he uses different terms. When discussing supervision practices, Sergiovanni (1988) indicates that we have "a floor of beliefs, opinions, values and attitudes which provide a foundation for practice (p. 233)." He calls this a platform from which we operate, similar to a political platform used by a political party in an election campaign. It is our platform which guides how we understand events and people and how we conduct

ourselves. Sergiovanni (1988) adds that everyone has a platform although it is not easily clarified (p. 243).This comes close to the notion of world view as expressed by Walsh and Middleton (1984).

Sergiovanni (1991), in his book The Principalship, uses the term mindscapes to indicate that a leader operates from a certain vantage point. He states that a mindscape can be seen as a road map which gives direction to your actions. These road maps are rules, assumptions, insights and principles which are dominant and give direction to leadership (p. 4). These mindscapes can also be referred to as mental frames of reference (p. 193). Sergiovanni (1991) recognizes that different mindscapes mean different theories which mean different approaches to management and leadership (p. 41). These concepts also come close to describing a world view.

When describing a normative view of supervision, Sergiovanni (1988) states that choices need to be made and they need to be faithful to value statements. These value statements are a philosophy and are assumptions and beliefs about how people should be treated (p. 22). Again we see similarities between these statements and what has been described earlier as world view. It is apparent that Sergiovanni (1988) is sensitive to what kinds of values may be important. When speaking about moral actions he describes them as being humane, compassionate, more loving, and productive for the purpose of a healthier and better world (p. 219). Yet, Sergiovanni (1988) does not carry this further and connect it to faith commitment and world view. It would be appropriate to ask; on what basis are these values put forward as desirable? From what starting point are you coming? What is your faith commitment? And that leads to asking, what is your world view?

World views (mindscapes, platforms) are founded upon the faith commitment a person makes. Not all people will be able to articulate or even suggest that they have a faith commitment, but all do operate from a such a starting point. World view is not equated with a philosophical framework or a

theological system: rather, it is foundational to such a way of thinking (Walsh and Middleton, 1984, p. 35).

Christian World Views

Christians are often assumed to all have the same faith commitments and consequently the same world view. While there certainly are common elements, the answers to the questions posed by Walsh and Middleton (1984) may vary, resulting in different world views. How Christians view the role of the church in the world can be a reflection or expression of their world view. Webber (1986) presents three expressions of the church in the world, reflecting different world views, in his book The Church in the World: the three expressions being (1) the church against the world, (2) the church and world in paradox, and (3) the church transforming the world (p. 81). The following brief, explanations offer only a snapshot of complex issues and may appear to be simplistic but they serve to show differing Christian world views.

Church against the world. Webber (1986) notes that some Christians view the church as being against the world (p. 81). This results in a world view that promotes a separatist role of the church and Christians from the world. Christians are not to be involved in culture or worldly affairs including government (p. 92). Contact with the world is necessary for existence but should be minimal. This world view does not promote people to take on roles of leadership except in matters of the church and its structures.

Church and world in paradox. The second view of the church and the world holds that the church and the world are in paradox. The Christian lives in the world and in the church but lives a dual life. The sacred part is in the church realm and the secular part is in the worldly realm. The only matters of consequence have to do with the church realm (Webber, p. 101). The Christian

can demonstrate his belief in God in the worldly realm through civic obedience but there is little call to make a difference or change the world (p. 118). There is no need or incentive to participate in government, business, education, or the arts in a way that would reflect that these institutions or aspects are part of what God has made.

Church transforming the world. The church transforming the world is a view that takes a different approach than the two previous ones. In this view the church is seen as having influence on the structures of life. Webber (1986) states:

> The transformationalist's view is not that of withdrawal, as emphasized by the separatist: nor is it that of accommodation, into which those who emphasize paradox may slip. Instead, the transformationalist advocates an optimistic position toward the world as central to the Christian conviction about history and life. (p. 124)

The world view that is connected with the church transforming the world is based on a faith commitment as are all world views. This faith commitment understands the world, created good by God, to have fallen away from the original goodness. The fallen, human nature comes to expression in all the doings of humankind, in all cultural formation. The fallen human condition is reversed through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. "The Christian hope is the ultimate release of humanity and creation from the bondage of sin into a new and perfect creation" (Webber, 1986, p. 125).

A person holding a world view stemming from this faith commitment does not view all things in the world as evil. Rather, structures such as government, schools, business are legitimate expressions of humankind working out and developing culturally as God had intended. Because of the fallen state of the world (sin) these structures do not always work perfectly and often go directly against what is good. Yet, the Christian is called to be active in these structures, searching as to how the structures should operate according to God's word in

the Bible. Along with this world view is the belief that the world will one day be made perfect again when Christ returns.

This world view advocates that Christians become active in politics, labour, education, recreation, the arts, and in all aspects of life and culture. Involvement goes beyond being reactive and condemning of these areas as some Christians are prone to do. Rather, activeness will involve discerning what is right and good and building upon that and working to change what is wrong. These are not easy tasks; they are challenging and require efforts of many people.

Summary

There are many world views. Walsh and Middleton (1984) state a world view:

> recognizes its own finitude and limitations. It is open to learn from other visions of life. This is a difficult proposition. People hold to a world view because they assume it gives a better account of reality than any other. But a world view is not infallible and therefore it must not be absolutized. We dare not let our world view become fixed. It must be informed constantly by reality and if we are Christian, by an increasing understanding or revelation, the Word of God. (p. 38)

Sergiovanni uses terms such as 'platforms' and 'mindscapes' to describe frames of reference or starting points which direct our view of the world around us and our actions in that world. Walsh and Middleton (1984) point out that our world view must always be open to correction or refinement from other world views. World views are based on a faith commitment. For Christians, the Bible, God's revelation of reality, is the criterion by which world views are examined and a Christian world view developed (p. 39).

Faith and Governance

Introduction

The Christian schools involved in this study have their historical roots in the Calvinistic/Reformed faith. Adherents to this faith tradition hold a world view that strives to integrate faith with all areas of life. Hollaar (1989), in Faith and Culture in the Governance of Calvinistic/Reformed Schools, identified several extensions of the faith assumptions held by the Calvinistic/Reformed Christian community. One of the extensions is the view that authority exists *only* for service. Another extension applicable to this study is that governance includes collegiality and accountability (p. 219).

Authority in Governance

Hollaar (1989) states that authority and governance exists for service and school governance should engage people directly. Anything that detracts from service should be minimized to avoid the brokenness and injustice that are results of sin. Authority and power can become self-preserving and commanding instead of serving. Hollaar continues and describes the basis or source of authority for governance:

> The Bible is the primary authority of faith and life. It expresses God's sovereignty and will for humans and creation. Scripture redefines the locus of authority away from the unquestioned human establishments such as traditions, institutions, institutional hierarchies, and human systems. The scriptures have the authority of God "which is supreme over everything else --over public opinion, over education, over child-rearing, over the media, and in short, over all the powerful agencies in our culture by which our world view is constantly being shaped" (Wolters, Creation Regained, 1985, p. 6). While traditions are significantly depreciated, this does not mean that traditions, human systems and even institutional hierarchies as such are anti-normative; but it does mean traditions need always to be tested by the spirit of the Word. (p. 222)

Authority and governance exercised by those in positions of leadership is to be of service to others. Sergiovanni (1993, p. 44) recognizes this idea in his book

Moral Leadership where he comments that leadership must not be self-serving but must serve others. Robert Greenleaf (1977) in Servant Leadership certainly emphasizes the role of a leader as being self-sacrificing and serving others. Authority and service are inseparable. We follow the example of Christ who had all authority and is the greatest servant of all.

Collegiality and Accountability

The second extension of the faith assumptions of the Reformed view involves collegiality and accountability. People are called by God to work together and to live together. Collegiality "calls for mutuality, openness to one another, being vulnerable to one another, affirming, challenging, and confronting one another in love, seeking the mind, the model, of Christ" (Hollaar, 1989, p. 225). Collegiality is a reflection of the relationships people working together have with each other. Hollaar identifies this as a horizontal dimension in relationships. He adds that there is also a vertical dimension, our response to God. This is where accountability enters. In a collegial atmosphere there is a "mutual accountability, the ability to have our world view and our attempts to embody that world view, our actions, judged--challenged or affirmed--not only by others, but together with others by the Word of God" (p. 225).

Collegiality requires going beyond developing and maintaining good working relationships. In the Christian, Reformed setting it means expanding the experience of God's gift of personal community into one of professional community (Stronks & Blomberg, 1993, p 117). Collegiality involves risk and speaking the truth in love. This is clearly defined by Stronks & Blomberg (1993) in A Vision With a Task:

> Therefore, teachers need to empty themselves, to give up things that stand in their way so they can truly hear and experience each other. They must deny themselves and submit to the healing that Jesus provides. Becoming a community of teachers involves a recognition that together they have been called by God to teach together, to love each

> other, and to pray and work together in response to the needs of the students. (p. 119)

This collegiality among teachers must also be developed between the school and the home, specifically in principal, teacher and parent relationships. Each school community should develop avenues for trust to develop between parents and teachers to enhance the learning of the students. There need to be avenues for dialogue when difficulties and problems occur. This is based on the common vision and the accountability that all have before God. (p. 127)

Vision to Action

The members of Christian schools from the Reformed/Calvinistic tradition want to have their beliefs reflected in their schools. Christian Schools International published a booklet in 1993 entitled From Vision to Action - The Basis and Purpose of Christian Schools to assist schools in articulating, reviewing, and refining their missions. Statements made here reflect the world view of CSI members.

> This rich tradition continues. Christian parents still search for schools that will teach their children that the world belongs to God. They want schools that will lead students to understand and heed God's call to bring justice and restoration to a fallen world. They acknowledge that God calls their children to the research lab, the law office, the political arena, the university, and the family farm as well as the pulpit and the mission field. Indeed, these parents seek schools that look beyond the classroom to the world. They will not settle for Christian schools that retreat from culture or simply add prayer and Bible reading to a public school curriculum. Nothing short of Scripture guiding all of life and learning will do. (p. 3)

The booklet then outlines a *Statement of Belief* based on the Bible and reflecting the Reformed tradition. The summary of the Christian faith held gives a description of the beliefs held about God, Creation, Sin, Covenant, Redemption, and the Kingdom of God. Based on the beliefs outlined a *Statement of Purpose* for Christian schools is described focusing on four areas -

Community, Staff, Students, and Curriculum. How these purpose are implemented is put forth in a section entitled *Guidelines for Implementation.* The guidelines address each of the four areas listed under the statement of purpose. Under the section for Community the *Task of the Board* is described. The items listed under the task reflect the ideas of authority for service and collegiality and accountability.

> The board is responsible for governing and guiding the school, acting on behalf of the Christian community in obedience to Christ. Therefore, it provides leadership and support to all it serves as it
>
> - continually articulates, clarifies, and promotes the school's mission to the community to ensure that the school will be well equipped to serve future generations,
> - formulates and approves programs and policies consistent with the school's goals and supports the chief administrator in implementing them,
> - appoints and supports all staff members and is responsible to see that all are included in ongoing evaluation designed to strengthen the school's ability to accomplish its mission,
> - evaluates the chief administrator in a way that is constructive and just,
> - participates in formulating and approving the school's annual and long-range goals,
> - encourages the entire school community - teachers, staff, students, parents, pastors - as it carries out the mission of the school,
> - adheres to governmental requirements insofar as doing so does not diminish the essential and distinctive character and goals of the Christian school. (pp. 11-12)

These guidelines are available to all the CSI schools. Each school decides for itself how they will use the guidelines and implement them in their own setting. There is room for considerable differences to occur in how the individual schools in Alberta, for example, carry out their mission or goals. Yet, having membership in an organization does suggest that there is agreement on the principal foundations. The four Christian schools that participated in this

study have vision or mission statements that reflect the statements described here.

CHAPTER 3
METHODOLOGY

Introduction

This chapter contains a description of the research method and design used in this study. The sections are: (a) the type of study conducted, (b) the sample and its selection, (c) a description of the data collection procedures, (d) an explanation of the data presentation and analysis, (e) limitations and delimitations, (f) considerations of validity and concluding comments.

Type of Study

To investigate the nature and extent of parental involvement in decision making in independent schools a naturalistic study with a qualitative approach to the research was used. For this study four independent Christian schools who are members of Christian Schools International were chosen. Within a school organization there are groups and individuals that have influence in the decision making process. The case study section of the research focused on principals and Board Chairpersons or representative. The main objective of the interviews was to build a base of knowledge and experiences about the organization and structure of independent Christian schools from the perspectives of the principal and Board Chairperson or representative. Both deductive and inductive analytical approaches were used. Deductive analysis was used when data were collected for a set of predetermined categories based on the sub problems and related questions. Inductive analysis of the interviews was carried out and led to the addition of further categories.

Each participant brought a unique perspective to the decision making process. Principals have an overall picture of the school's operation and are involved in the implementation of decisions from all levels. Chairpersons, or other board members, brought an organizational viewpoint as representatives of

parents. Parents observe their children in the daily activities of the school but may be unaware of the unseen workings of the school unless they are part of the school board or its committees.

School documents, the results of people's decisions, provided further information for consideration and comparison with the data collected from interviews. The documents were collected from the schools and were analyzed to provide concrete information and examples about the structure and organization of the school. This included the make up and membership of the Schools Society, the Board, and committees of the Board. The documents provided background information about each school relevant to the research topic.

Sample

The target population for this study was independent Christian schools in Canada that are parent run or controlled through an elected Board and are members of Christian Schools International. The accessible population was limited to schools whose principals and Boards volunteered and were in the vicinity of Edmonton.

Many of the independent Christian schools in the target population have come together collectively in provincial organizations for purposes of sharing resources, professional development, lobbying of governments, and development of curriculum. The provincial organizations also work together on a national level. Each provincial organization has one or more curriculum coordinators. The curriculum coordinator for the independent Christian schools in Alberta aided in the identification and selection of four representative schools the Edmonton vicinity that made up the sample population used in this study.

Data Collection

The data were collected using semi-structured interviews with the principal and Board Chairperson or representative. Prior to the interview, the principal and board chairperson were informed of the intent of the study and the general direction of the interview. The interview conferences were audio taped for further analysis and reference. Follow up contact was made when necessary.

The interview schedule (Appendix A) consisted of reference information for the researcher along with 19 questions designed to collect data in the desired areas. Prior to the interviews the questions were reviewed with a principal not involved with the study to determine their clarity and applicability. Minor adjustments to wording were made following this review.

The interviewer followed the interview schedule using an informal approach. While respondents were asked to respond to each of the 19 questions, additional phrases or questions were directed to them to elicit further input or clarification. Care was taken not to give judgemental comments either affirming or negating responses. The respondents appeared comfortable and were ready to share more information than was called for in the questions.

All respondents were made aware of their right to opt out of the interview at any time and to opt out of having their data used in the research any time after the interview. This was explained verbally prior to the interview and a written consent form (Appendix B) was provided. The respondents retained a copy of the form. The interviews were audio taped, transcribed and the transcripts sent to the interviewees for review to check for accuracy of all responses. All respondents readily consented to the use of their interviews and confirmed the contents and accuracy of the transcripts.

These procedures helped to minimize influence of interviewer bias that can be associated with research collection through semi-structured interviews. The researcher's experiences in conducting interviews in the hiring of teachers

were an asset in establishing an open climate of trust during the interview process.

Additional data were obtained from school records and documents. Each school was requested to provide school documents that related to parental involvement in decision making in the school. The requested items were:

- constitution of the school
- mission or vision statement
- policies and committee mandates
- Parent Handbook
- Board Handbook

Some schools were able to provide more data than others in these areas.

Data Analysis

The interviews and conferences were transcribed and the data analyzed to identify recurring themes. Because the interviews were semi-structured there were data that was not anticipated and needed further clarification. The themes were grouped into categories that reflected the research questions.

Schools tend to have many of their practices and decisions documented. A review of the documents of the organizations in the case studies adds data and provides for further comparison. The schools were asked to identify relevant documentation and provide access to them. The documents were analyzed and compared with the themes identified in the interviews.

Background/Role of the Researcher

My interest in researching the topic of decision making in independent Christian schools stems from my work in Christian schools for thirteen years as a teacher and a principal. These background experiences allowed me as researcher to relate to and understand the perspectives of the interviewees and the data they provided. My experiences also provided a frame of reference as I analyzed the data in the school documents provided. Conversely, these

experiences could contribute to researcher bias in the carrying out of the interviews and in the data analysis. Effort was made to limit the bias by following the interview guide and by reviewing the data as objectively as possible.

Limitations

The data collection from the respondents in the interviews was limited by their willingness to be open and frank and their ability to recall. This was overcome to a certain degree by discussing the intent of the research indicating that responses would not reflect back on their school. Respondents were also aware of my own background and experience with schools such as theirs in Alberta and British Columbia. This familiarity added to a climate of trust and understanding during the interview; the respondents felt they were talking to someone who would understand them.

My biases as researcher and interviewer could also place limitations on the data collected in interviews. Using a standard interview guide addressed some of this concern.

Delimitations

The research was made manageable by limiting the schools studied to the geographical area of central Alberta within an approximate radius of 200 kilometres of Edmonton. The number of interviews was limited to eight. In the four schools chosen the principal and Board Chairperson or representative were interviewed.

Validity

The small sample size is not unusual in case studies but raise concerns of generalizability. However, the schools in the target population, accessible population, and actual sample population for the study exhibit similar characteristics and have similar natures which adds strength to external validity.

The schools' collective involvement provincially provides some homogeneity in the target population.

Independent schools and public schools exhibit similar characteristics in their day-to-day operations. Parental involvement in public School Councils and in independent school Boards have similarities although there are also significant differences. This allows the findings from this research to be compared with studies done on School Councils and the information can be analyzed to determine how applicable the findings of this study are to schools beyond the target population of this research.

CHAPTER 4
PRESENTATION OF DATA

Introduction

The data for this study were obtained from four independent Christian schools in Central Alberta. The presentation of the data is organized into three sections - School Society Documents, Principal Interviews, and Board Chairperson Interviews. The data were sorted into categories and divisions based on the research sub-problems and on categories that arose as the data were reviewed. The names of the schools and the respondents have been changed. The four schools are identified as Atown Christian School (ACS), Bestside Christian School (BCS), Central Christian School (CCS), and Downtown Christian School (DCS).

School Society Documents

The school societies' documents were examined for information related to parental involvement in decision making. The data are presented under the headings:

(a) School Societies
(b) Board of Directors
(c) Committees of the Board
(d) Parent Representation

School Societies

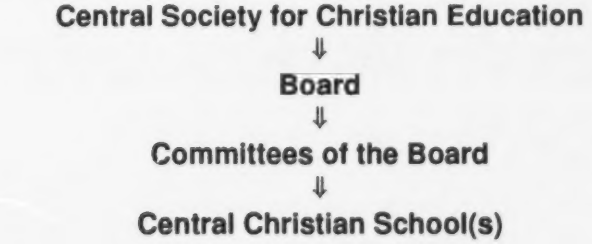
Any organization in society needs structures in place to carry out its purposes, to allow for smooth operation, and to meet requirements either external (government regulations) or internal. The type of organization and its primary focus will determine the bureaucratic practices needed and the development of policies and regulations. All four schools in this study were

established by a school society and governed by an elected Board. The official names of the school societies appeared in their constitutions. Two school societies' names were in the format of The Atown Christian School Society; the other two had their official name in the form The Central Society for Christian Education. The names of the schools were different than the society names and reflected location in the town or city in which they were located or had a name with a Biblical reference.

General Organization

The four Christian school societies studied are similar in their organizational structures. The school society was formed by parents and supporters interested in setting up and running an independent Christian school. The members of the school society elected a Board of Directors (Board) from within their membership. The Board established committees, accountable to the Board, to assist in the governance and operation of the school. In this study, three of the school societies had each established one school governed by their Board. One school society had four schools established, all governed by its Board. Figure 4.1 shows and describes a typical organizational framework.

Figure 4-1
Typical Organizational Framework of School Society



Central Society for Christian Education

- society members are parents, teachers, and supporters that are in agreement with the constitution and pay the membership dues
- the School Society holds membership in:
  AISCA - Association of Independent Schools and Colleges in Alberta
  CSI - Christian Schools International

Board

- the Board is the governing body of the school(s) on behalf of all the parents and supporters of the school society
- the members of the Board are elected by the school society members
- the principal(s) attends Board meetings but does not vote at Board meetings

Committees of the Board

- various committees are appointed and mandated by the Board to carry out tasks, duties and responsibilities needed to operate the school(s)
- the committees report to the Board

Central Christian School(s)

- the principal is responsible for the day to day operation of the school and the teaching staff and support staff that have been hired by the Board
- some school societies operate more than one school

Each school society had a description of its organizational structures and related information. The description was printed in the Handbooks of the

schools as information for parents and for those interested in joining the school society. An example from the Parent Handbook of CCS follows.

> CCS is controlled by a Board of Trustees elected by the membership of the Central Society for Christian Education. The Board carries out many of its tasks through a system of committees which are advisory to the Board. The function of the various committees is described below.
>
> CCS holds membership in Christian Schools International (CSI), a service organization for Christian schools of our type. This organization provides a link to sister schools, arranges and carries out curriculum work, and manages the wage benefit plans available to our teachers.
>
> Our membership in Christian Schools International also gives us membership in District II of that organization, the district made up of schools in Alberta, Saskatchewan, and Manitoba. This membership is very valuable to us. Through it we have access to a bank of curriculum units developed by Christian teachers, to the services of the District Curriculum coordinator, Ary DeMoor, and to all special workshops and programmes offered in the District.
>
> CCS also holds membership in the Association of Independent Schools and Colleges of Alberta (AISCA). Through this membership we are linked to other independent schools in order to speak with a combined political voice. This is the group that is currently organizing the "Choices for Children" campaign aimed at increasing government funding of independent schools.

ACS has a similar description of the school society's structure in a section of their Orientation Handbook used specifically for new parents.

> The ACS is a parental Christian school meaning the parents play an important part in the operation of the school. Normally parents are members of the Atown Christian School Society and as such participate in the election of the School Board. The school board in turn oversees the operation of the school and is ultimately responsible for the education provided and its financing. The Board is assisted in its work by advisory committees appointed to oversee various aspects of the school operation including standing committees such as Education, Finance, Transportation, Maintenance and Auxiliary. The principal is directly responsible to the Board of Directors for the day to day operation of the school. As you can see from this description, the ACS needs many volunteers to work on its various committees.

The school societies were set up to be parent-controlled schools through an elected Board. This reflects the belief and philosophical stand that parents have the primary responsibility for the education of their children. This is stated in the constitutions or handbooks of the schools studied. In Article I - The Basis of the Society of their constitution, ACS includes a section on Parents:

> ... That the primary responsibility for the direction of education rests upon parents to whom children are entrusted by God. Christian parents should be aware of this God-given obligation in view of the covenantal relationship which God established with believers and their children. They should therefore seek to fulfil this obligation in sending their children to Christian schools.

Also included is a section called Community which describes the broader Christian community as having responsibility and a role in establishing and maintaining Christian schools. BCS states the same concept in Article III - Educational Creed of their constitution. Section 11 under this article states:

> We believe that the responsibility for the education of children rests primarily with the parents, to whom children are entrusted by God, and secondarily with the larger covenant family - the citizens of the Kingdom of God. [Deut. 6:6-9; Acts 2:42-47; Eph. 4:2-13].

Constitutions

Each school society had a written constitution outlining articles and by-laws of the society. The constitutions varied in wording and order but had common articles or by-laws describing:

- name of the school society
- basis or objectives of the society
- educational creed or policy
- membership guidelines for the society
- meetings of the society
- Board of Directors - composition and duties
- finances
- amendments

- dissolution or disbandment of the society

Membership

Each constitution defined the qualifications for membership in the school society. The following basic elements were common:

- person must be 18 years of age or older
- person must be in agreement with (or subscribe to) the basis of the constitution, or the objectives and educational creed of the constitution, or the constitution and the bylaws of the school society.
- person must either pay tuition as a parent or for those without children in the school a pay or give a donation or annual membership fee.
- members are entitled to vote at all general and special meeting of the school society.

Each constitution identified ways that membership could be cancelled either by the member or through a process of voting when it was determined that a member is in conflict with the basis of the school society. Provisions in the constitution also allowed membership to be cancelled for non-payment of fees or indebtedness to the society.

Each school society allowed community members who did not have children in the school to become society members if they were supporters of Christian education and met the qualifications outlined. Any person with full membership in the society was eligible to be elected to the Board and/or be appointed to serve on committees of the Board. Two school societies' constitutions stated that an employee of the school society and that person's spouse were not eligible to be on the Board.

Members of the school society had certain rights and obligations. The school society for ACS, in its constitution, indicated that "membership includes the privilege of voting at the meetings of the society as well as readiness to participate in activities on behalf of the school entered into by the organization".

The school society for CCS included in its constitution a section under membership entitled Rights which stated the following:

1. Every member in good standing has the right to share in all the privileges of the society.
2. Every member in good standing has the right to attend at and speak at all general meetings.
3. Every member in good standing has the right to one vote per issue at the general meeting.
4. Every member in good standing has the right to make himself available for positions of office in the society.

Vision Statements

Each school society developed a vision or mission statement for its school(s). The vision statements were designed to be a concise description of the purpose and direction or goals the school society had for its school(s). The vision statements indicated the world view of the members of the society. They were to function as the reference or starting point when decisions were made at the school, Board, or society levels. The common elements in the vision statements were:

- A statement about God, his Word, creation, and redemption through Christ - world view.
- A description of the purpose of Christian education - assisting parents in the nurturing and guiding of children for a life of service to Christ. This included enabling students to experience living from a Christian world view.

The complete vision statements for each school society are listed in Appendix C.

General and Special Society Meetings

Each school societies' constitution mandated that there be an annual school society meeting. Two school societies indicated in their constitution that there must be two meetings yearly. In practice, all four societies held at least

two regular full school society meetings; one in the fall and one in the spring. The fall meeting typically included reports on the activities and progress of the school. The financial statements from the previous school year were reviewed and adopted. The spring society meeting included the election of new Board members, the presentation and approval through a vote of the next year's school society budget, and discussion of new policy or program changes.

According to the constitutions of all school societies, special society meetings could be called by the Board. These special meetings could be called for any reason the Board thought necessary. This could include:

- developing, writing a vision statement
- presentation of proposed building plans
- presentation of proposed program, school growth plans
- presentation of proposals for the borrowing of capital for building plans or land purchase.

Society members would be asked to approve by vote recommendations from the board for any major building proposals or financial decisions.

Notice for all society meetings was to be given to all members indicating time, place, and an agenda or reason for the meeting. The time frames of the schools for such notice to be given was: one society - no time frame, one - seven days, one - eight days, and the last society - fourteen days. An example of an announcement for a special society meeting for BCS follows:

Society Meeting
April 18, 1994

BUILDING KICKOFF
DESSERT NIGHT

> At our March 28, Society Meeting we discussed our future building plans. Cost estimates were shared and the financial challenge discussed. It was felt that to achieve success in our building project Society support was crucial. You are encouraged to attend the April 18 Society Meeting in which we will be outlining our financial, fund raising strategies. A final decision with regards to building will be made. We would like it to be a fun, exciting evening where we as a Society move forward together.

> We will spend an evening discussing, praising God and enjoying some fancy desserts and good fellowship. More information will be sent out Thursday, April 14 with a complete agenda.

The results of the Society Meeting were given in the school's newsletter dated April 19, 1994. It was reported that the challenge had been accepted. The motion "that the Board moves that we proceed with building the classroom addition providing we raise $100,000 by June 6, 1994" was approved by the Society. The vote was unanimous except for one abstention.

Each school society's constitution also had a provision that the Board must call a special society meeting upon the written, signed request from one fourth of the school society members (one school required the signatures of a quorum; this was not clearly defined). The request had to state the reason for the meeting. The Board was required to call a meeting within one month of the request.

Board of Directors

Composition of the Board

The constitution and bylaws of each school society identified the number of Board members required. One constitution indicated the Board must consist of nine people. The other three school society constitutions indicated a minimum number of members; two had "no less than seven" and one had "at least five." The actual number of Board members in each school society varied. One school society had seven Board members; one school society had eight. Each of the other two school societies had nine Board members.

The term of office for Board members for each school society was three years with a possibility of re-election for one additional term. Provisions were made to stagger the retirement of Board members so that in any one year there would not be a complete turnover of Board members. Each school society

constitution also stated that the Board members were to appoint among themselves members to fill the positions of president, vice-president, secretary, and treasurer. The tasks of each position were also defined.

Duties of the Board

Each school society constitution listed the duties of the Board. One school identified the duties of the officers in this section along with the general duties of the Board. Duties of the specific officers are not included. There were many common elements along with elements unique to a particular school.

Common elements. The following duties of the Board were common to three of the school societies constitutions.

Duties of the Board of Directors

1. Determine school policies in harmony with the constitution, existing government regulations, and in accordance with the society decisions.
2. Select and appoint principals and teaching staff and other personnel who are qualified to carry out the educational program and other duties in accordance with the policies of the Society. Appointments of these persons shall be made for such terms and upon such salary and other conditions as the board agrees with them from time to time.
3. Devise ways and means for obtaining the funds necessary for the operation of the schools, and determine how these funds shall be distributed.
4. Advance the cause of Christian education in the community by suitable means, and promote this cause in general through association with other Christian schools.
5. Appoint out of its membership such committees as it may deem necessary for the performances of its duties. Such appointments shall be made annually by the President of the Board.

Unique elements. The following duties were unique to each school society. They are listed under the school operated by each society.

ACS - Duties of the Board of Directors

1. Appoint two of its own number to visit the school each month to assure itself of the faithful carrying out of the school's educational program and policies.

BCS - Duties of the Directors - these were the only duties listed for this society other than the specific duties for officers.

1. The membership of the Board of Directors shall give strong Christian leadership to the society. Also, members of the Board of Directors shall be sensitive and helpful in maintaining good relationships between parents and the school, between all members of the society and the community.
2. All matters pertaining to the actual operation of the school shall be entrusted to the Board of Directors. It will engage the teaching staff and other staff members of the school, and shall stipulate salaries.

CCS - Duties of the Board of Directors

1. Hold bonds, securities and monies, land, or borrow monies with or without securities and raise monies for carrying out the objectives of the Society. The Board shall have the power to invest the monetary assets of the Society in the same manner and in the same securities as licensed insurers are granted under the Canada and British Insurers's Act.
2. In general, exercise all such powers and do all such acts and things as are requisite to promote the purposes of the Society.

DCS - Duties of the Board of Directors - No unique duties were listed but a special section on powers was described. Only this school society had this section.

1. The board is the controlling body in all matters pertaining to the schools operated by the society.
2. The board may make rules and regulations:
   - pertaining to the meetings of the board and its transactions;
   - for fixing the quorum of the board;

- for the appointment of such committees and officials as the board deems necessary;
- for conferring on any such committees and officials power and authority to act for the board in relation to such matters as the board deems it expedient to delegate to a committee or official with the power to act for the board.

Board Meetings

The frequency of Board meetings was not indicated in the constitutions of any school society. In practice, all four school Boards held meetings at least once a month with extra meetings held to deal with unfinished business or special matters. The agendas for the meetings included reports from the standing committees of the Board with discussion and voting on any recommendations that were presented. The principals attended all Board meetings but not as voting members of the Board.

Committees of the Board

Number and Composition

Each Board had the responsibility to establish committees which carried out specific tasks and duties relating to the school(s) on behalf of the Board. From the constitutions and handbooks it was apparent that there were a number of committees that were common to each school society in the study with some variation in names of the committees. The committees established by the Board of each school society common to all four school societies are listed in Table 4.1. Also included is a list of committees unique to each school society. The number of committees for each school society ranged from six to fourteen.

Table 4-1

Board Committees

Committees Common to all the Boards

Education
Finance
Public Relations / Promotion
Maintenance / Building
Fund Raising (combined with Finance Committee in one school)
Transportation (common to two schools, separate from Board in the other two)
Local Advisory - ECS

Committees unique to Each Board of the Four Schools

ACS	**BCS**
Special Project Fund Raising Special project Building Auxiliary - General Fund Raising	none

CCS	**DCS**
Employee Relations Special Needs Group Booster	Employment Relations Exceptional Needs Administrative Fund Raising Government Relations Facility Review Credentials Archives

Committee Meetings

The standing committees of the Board usually met on a monthly basis and forwarded information and recommendations to the Board. Each committee commonly had a Board representative or liaison that relayed information

between the Board and the committee. Some committees would meet on a as needed basis to complete their task or mandate. This could include committees such as Credentials and Employee Relations. Ad hoc committees were set up to deal with one time matters and/or special requests.

Duties of the Committees

Table 4.1 lists the committees that were common to all the Boards of the school societies. The four main committees for each Board were the Education, Finance, Public Relations or Promotion, and the Building committees.

The Education Committee was considered the main committee of the Board, sometimes being referred to as the Board's right arm. The mandates for the Education committee focused on two major areas, the educational program of the school (curriculum and instruction) and the staffing for the school. The mandates make it clear that the Education committee advises the Board or makes recommendations to the Board regarding policies and program and that the Board has final authority in the decision making. The introduction to the Education Committee mandate for BCS gives a good summary.

> Education Committee Mandate - BCS (introduction)
>
> The general task of the committee is to supervise the school's educational program so that it is in harmony with the basis and principles of the school society. The committee gives advice to the teaching staff and makes recommendations to the school board with respect to educational matters. It helps the school establish a learning community where teachers and students can develop their insights and skills in an atmosphere that strives to reflect Christ's love for His people. While it is the board that makes final policy decisions, the committee is able to base its advice on thorough analyses that should enable the board to make thoughtful decisions without duplicating the committee's work.

Specific duties in the mandates explained how the committee was to carry out its main focus. This included aspects as setting up time lines for review of present

curriculum or new curriculum and procedures as to encouraging present staff and reviewing potential candidates for teaching positions.

The main task of the finance committee included the following. The committee was to oversee the income and expenditures for the society in each school year. This was usually done involving a hired or volunteer book keeper, the treasurer for the Board, and the principal or vice-principal of the school. The Finance committee was to also prepare each year a proposed budget for the next school year which would need to adopted by the board and then passed by vote by the membership of the school society. The Finance Committee also dealt with tuition matters in connection with the collection of fees and the establishment of the tuition scale based on the budget recommendations.

The Public Relations or Promotion Committees were to develop an awareness of and advance the cause of Christian education in the supporting community of the school and the general community of the town or city. The committee was to work towards increasing support for the school and increasing the membership of the school society.

The mandates for the Building committees included maintaining and upgrading present facilities. They were also involved in the planning of new projects but each Board set up special committees to deal with major expansions, new facilities, and the fund raising required for these.

All committee decisions would come to the board as recommendations and would need the board's final approval. The approval of yearly budgets and major expenditures for building or expansion plans would need Board approval and then would be brought to the school society membership for final approval.

Parent Representation on the Board and Committees

The Board for each school society was elected from the society membership. The majority of board members were parents with children in the school but each school society could also have board members that did not have

children in the school. The principals in all schools attended the board meetings but were not voting members of the board. Board members are also assigned to various committees of the board to act as liaisons between the committees and the board.

The number of members on committees ranged from four to fourteen members. The membership of committees was predominantly from parents of the school society. Appointments to the committees were officially made by the Board. Parents were approacned and asked if they would be willing to serve on a committee. Parents could also volunteer and the Board would consider the request. There often was principal or teacher representation on the committee as well as the Board liaison. Table 4.2 shows the number of members on the Board and its committees for each school.

Table 4-2

Number of Members on the Board and Committees

School ⇨	ACS	BCS	CCS	DCS
Board of Directors	9	7	8	9
Committees				
Education	9	6	8	14
Finance	5	6	5	4
Public Relations / Promotion	5	6	8	8
Bussing / Transportation	6	*	5	**
Fund Raising	4	***		4
Maintenance / Building	1	6	6	4
Local Advisory Committee - (LAC)	10	9	9	11
Library			6	
Booster / Auxiliary	12		5	7
Administration				5
Employee Relations			7	6
Archive				3
Credentials				4
Special Needs / Exceptional Needs				2+
Special Project Building	6	6	****	
Facility Review				6
TOTAL	67	46	67	87

Principal Interviews Data

The data on parental involvement in decision making in the schools collected from four principals were divided into five categories. These categories were:

(a) how parents are involved in decision making,

(b) perceptions of parental involvement,

(c) benefits, drawbacks, problems with parental involvement in decision making,

(d) how parents should not be involved in decision making,

(e) reflection of the beliefs stated in the school societies' vision or mission statements.

The four principals are referred to as Don, Beth, Mary, and John. One principal had three years experience as an administrator; the others each had 13 years or more of experience. One principal had teaching experience in the public school system. Three of the principals worked in a system that had one board governing one school. One principal worked in a system with one board governing four schools.

How Parents are Involved

Board and Committees

All of the principals identified the Board and committees of the Board as being the significant and obvious avenues through which parents could make decisions about the school's operation and programs. All commented that the Board members were elected by the membership of the school society and acted as the societies' voice. As Mary stated, "the majority of input and involvement is done through the people elected to the school Board and those who sit on committees." John noted that "our school system is very much a parent-controlled school. The parents elect from the membership Board members to

speak on their behalf and to help guide and direct the school on their behalf." The principals stated that, although they sit in at all Board meetings, they do not vote and act only in an advisory role.

The principals felt the committees of the Board were very important. Here, decisions about policy, direction, and operations were made and recommended to the Board for final approval. Parent representation on the committees was strong, according to Mary, who stated that although many committees may have a staff member on them they usually had three to six community members on them depending on the size of the committee. Mary also commented that "there are a lot of committees and they all have parents on them; that is a lot of parents involved."

John remarked that even if parents were not on a committee or the Board they always had the avenue of talking to a member of the committee or addressing a letter to the committee or Board. While this was not direct decision making, he felt it was a definite avenue for the parent. Don felt somewhat differently. Although organizational structures such as the Board and committees did not discourage parents to be involved, Don stated:

> The average parent feels some distance from the school in terms of decision making. There is an avenue for parents through the Education Committee and people who serve on the Education Committee certainly are involved in decision making. But to say that John Smith, who has kids in the school and never served on the Education Committee is involved in decision making; I don't think he would feel he is involved in decision making a whole lot.

For Don this was especially true for new families not familiar with the school and the society. Another principal commented that even though all these avenues for involvement exist, many parents choose not to make use of them.

Beth and Mary felt the smaller sizes of their schools and their relatively young existence demanded and encouraged a great number of the parents to be involved both in the decision making and in the day-to-day operations of the school. Mary commented that many people are given much authority and that

the school society's governance structures could be seen as horizontal; there was not really a hierarchy. Beth used words like 'grass roots' and 'strong ownership' in describing decision making and other involvement in the school. Beth emphasized:

> When you look at the committees, seven committees with six members on each, you are looking at about 42 bodies. We have about 60 families represented in our school so you can see that although you may have one person occasionally serving on two committees, there is a tremendous amount of involvement and ownership of the parents in the school.

Beth added that when the school started she was the teacher for grades one through five and had no administration time. Right at the start there were parents helping and making decisions out of necessity and that has carried on as the school has grown. She said "I think, in one sense, I underestimate how much parental involvement there is in the school because it is such a natural part of the school."

General and Special School Society Meetings

The principals also identified the general and special society meetings as areas where parents were directly involved in making decisions. Mary noted that all parents were members of the society and voted for the Board members.

Financial Decisions. Parents also voted on specific items such as the school budget as noted by all the principals. Don added that in addition to voting on the yearly budget the membership also voted on special expenditures for things such as building programs. Beth gave an example of the process for deciding about building plans.

> Basically, the school has grown quite dramatically over the years and our latest project is this. About two years ago, at our society level, we came up with a long range plan. We discussed the needs of the school and as a society we approved a long range plan. In the last two years, we came up with a concept drawing for a new building which again the society

> approved. At that point, when the approval of the plans was there, we sent them to the architect. They drew up the plans and our building committee, which is all parents, came to our society, and presented the costs of building. As a society we discussed the proposal. Two weeks later we had another society meeting to actually have the vote on the building project. The society members, at that point, had an opportunity to vote on whether to go ahead with the project or reject it.

Building projects and major expenditures of money were named by all four principals as areas where all the parents had the opportunity to share in the decision making.

Curricular decisions. Principals identified special society meetings or parent focus meetings as another area where parents were involved. An issue that seemed to be common to all schools centered around health curriculum, specifically, the family life or sex education component. Don and Mary indicated a parent survey was used initially followed by a discussion meeting involving parents. Input and direction resulting from the meeting were given to the Education Committee and a decision regarding the implementation of curriculum was made based on input received. In a sensitive subject as this three principals noted that the input was received from the parents and the Education Committee would make a decision based on this. The decision would need to be approved by the Board. Mary felt there was some ambiguity in these areas. She noted that the way the curriculum is chosen or implemented does not always follow the processes set out. A curriculum change could be initiated by staff and implemented without proper channels having been followed. There was parent input and involvement but not always an official decision made to change or add to the curriculum. She felt it would be better in the future to have the support of the Education Committee first.

Program decisions. Mary related one incident of a potential change in the Kindergarten program due to provincial government cuts to education. A decision was needed - whether to have the Kindergarten program cut back or maintain the full program as in previous years. Surveys were given to the parents and meetings held to receive input. After input was received it appeared that the parent opinion was split evenly on the issue. At that point, Mary states, the Board had to make a decision and carry it out. Earlier in the interview, Mary made this comment:

> Eventually it gets down to the fact that there are major decisions to be made. Parents have elected a Board to make these decisions and in some way people need to put trust in the Board to make the proper decision. Some people feel comfortable with that and some people do not.

This sentiment was also expressed by other principals. Beth noted that the Board and Education Committee have the parent representation on them when decisions are made. John's comments were similar.

Communication. All principals noted that principals, Board members, and committee members had to be open to receive input from parents. The parents had to know that they had been heard. This did not always mean the parents could decide at that time what would or would not happen; the process of going through the Board and Committees needed to be followed. A second point that the principals agreed on was communication to the parents. The parents needed to be kept informed about issues, topics, meetings. Two principals mentioned orientating new parents as to how the school operated and how the school society works as a whole. Information was sent home by newsletters and special bulletins. Two school societies had an annual or bi-annual questionnaire or survey that was given to parents to receive input on a wide range of matters including involvement.

Perceptions

Parents

The principals stated that parents felt they have the opportunity to be involved in decision making. One principal added "at the same time I think the majority of parents feel they have elected Board members who will make decisions for them because of like-mindedness." Mary said she hoped parents would feel they have avenues they can work with that allow their voices to be heard and give opportunity for decisions to be made. She continued:

> I think some are more aware of the avenues than others. This is something that we need to continue to work on so that people realize their voice can be heard.... we generally don't have a lot of problem finding Board members so it seems people have a fairly good perception of what the Board's task is and that it is valuable be involved on the Board. It seems to be fairly positive.

Don felt that parents perceptions about their involvement in decision making depended on how long they have been with the school society. He states:

> I think the average parent, especially the new parent coming into the school, feels or sees some mystery about the whole thing. People who have been around for a long time understand how issues are dealt with and how they can have input. They make use of the avenues quite effectively and often. New parents, although you try to inform them, are sometimes overwhelmed by all of the different things that are going on in the school society. They are probably overwhelmed by the jargon that is specific to Christian schools.

Don added that his school now provided a workshop for new parents at the beginning of the school year which outlined procedures of the school and opportunities for involvement. He felt that this has definitely helped parents understand the organization of the school and how they are part of decision making.

Beth felt that parents saw their involvement as being successful because of the trust relationship that had been developed over the years between the

Board and society and herself as principal. There was harmony among the whole group. Again Beth talked about having to develop in parents a sense of ownership for the school.

Principals

The principals felt positive about the involvement of parents. Don shared, "for me to be effective I need parents to be involved. It is probably not as much as I would like." Don felt that this was due in part to the lack of time he had to encourage involvement and keep parents informed so they could make good decisions. Beth related that "it would be easier for a principal to have total power because then you could just dictate for things to happen. However, to have real growth and real success and cooperation in the school you have to have ownership of parents." Mary's comment reflected her perception that the involvement of parents is crucial.

> I think for the independent school parental involvement in decision making is the basis of the school. The parents are the governing force because they have been given the responsibility to educate their children. They have the responsibility to be involved and I very much support that idea which is the basis on which the school has been organized.

According to the principals, teachers also perceived the involvement of parents as positive. Most of the comments made here focused more on the appreciation the teachers had of parents coming in to the classroom and helping out in the day to day activities of the school. John stated the teachers see parents are involved in the governing of the school. "They see it very quickly because their bosses are parents who are Board members. That's direct parent involvement. ... This school society is operated by parents. It's not run by the minister; it's not a parochial school, it's not a church school. It is a parent controlled school."

Benefits, Drawbacks, and Problems

Mary summed up a general feeling among the principals as to the benefits of having parents involved in decision making.

> I think parental involvement makes the school a whole lot stronger because it forms and strengthens the community between the home and the school and that is the basis on which our school is established. We must work together. Together we are educating the kids and we need to be on common ground. We need to be dialoguing back and forth. That is the heart of where we are at.

Don identified potential draw backs. He felt that if parents are not informed about options available they can make mistakes in their decisions and in the process of coming to decisions. He gave an example of how this occurred at a meeting to discuss graduation:

> The parents were confused about what their responsibilities were and what decisions could be made. What came out of it was a wasted meeting; the parents went around in circles and made decisions they were not empowered to make. I guess it was a good example of not being clearly informed about what was their responsibility and what was the school's responsibility in this matter.

John saw a drawback in the long process that needed to occur before a change was made. He states:

> Sometimes it is a long process to get changes occurring because it means communicating. It means sharing. It means dialoguing. It means trying to understand. It sometimes also means overcoming wrong perceptions, because perceptions for a lot can be reality. But I truly believe that if we are honest and open with one another, that long process, that communication, that dialoguing is healthy for all involved.

John felt that often much time was needed for the Board and parents to understand decisions and why they were made. He also commented that a process must be followed as outlined by the constitution and bylaws that are in place.

> It's not just a free for all, do what you want to do. There is order. There is structure as far as who does what and what sequence does it occur and

> what are the steps you have to go through to bring about certain kinds of changes. So there is orderliness and so there should be.

Beth shared what she saw as hazards or draw backs. She commented that a number of parents do not have a strong background in Christian education or education in general. There was not an understanding philosophically as to what the main goal of the school was; it was seen as a business. She felt that some of this was due to the rural setting of the school with many people being self-employed in the farming community.

How Parents Should Not be Involved In Decision Making

The principals felt that parents should be involved in all decisions. This was immediately clarified or explained. Principals stated that they had responsibilities and duties given to them with respect to the daily operations of the school. It would not be appropriate for parents to come in and be able to decide what notebooks or pencils to order. The parent cannot come in and tell the principal how to run the school. John stated the principal operates the school within the policy guidelines set out by the Board.

> A parent just can't come in and say I want this done differently. I want this recess done in such and such a fashion. No way. They've gone too far and that is not their responsibility. That is what I have been hired (to do,) to carry out board policy. If they want that recess changed, they can express it to me. We can discuss it. If we think it is a good thing to change as an operation we would be more than happy to change it. If we don't think it is a good thing to change and they are still not satisfied, they take the next step by going to the Education Committee. If the Education Committee thinks its a worthwhile change . . . . And so it goes in its sequence. So there are certain areas that are not the parents domain. That is the teacher's domain. That is the principal's domain. That is the Education Committee's domain.

Mary shared another perspective where she saw parents as part of the decision making but recognized that teachers are also part of the school community.

> I don't know if I would say parents should not be involved, but I think there are some areas where perhaps other people's opinions should count as

> much as theirs, especially in the area of curriculum and pedagogy. The teachers are professionally trained to make some of those decisions and I think that teachers' expertise needs to be relied on in those areas. I think, generally, that is respected in our school. Parents place trust in their staff and when changes come before the Education Committee the teachers' opinions carry a fair amount of weight.

School Societies' Beliefs

The principals felt that the school societies' beliefs as expressed in the vision or mission statements were evident in the decision making processes of the school. Mary shared that her school believed a lot in community. The Board worked in that framework and kept things open and people involved. They try to develop "the whole idea of respect and love. I think it comes across fairly strongly". Mary also states that there is brokenness in how the school operates but expresses the goal of community:

> I think the whole idea is we are in this together and as staff and parents and board members or what ever capacity you are serving. What we are here to do is educate our kids in the Christian school and to educate them for responsible discipleship. I think it is important to keep avenues of communication open, to invite parents into the school on a regular basis or to have the doors open, and to try to work on building relationships.

Beth felt the general direction of the school was in agreement with the beliefs stated. She felt that the school had the job of continuing to encourage parents in their thinking and development of what Christian education is about. Through the school's newsletter the principal and the Board attempted to bring this about.

> Every two weeks we have a newsletter that goes to the homes. I try to write something that makes the parents think. The board reports and other reports in the newsletter encourage the parents to grow in their appreciation of Christian education. Because we draw from a diverse variety of backgrounds, we have a challenge as a school to try to bring unity. The newsletter is one way. Having our society meetings and committees is another. The more we work together, the more we grow together.

Beth concludes with a statement about the school's vision.

> I think the strength of our school is a strong vision and ownership of the parents in that vision. If you have a strong vision but not have ownership you are not going to have the success that you want. But I think the fact that we really try to have the society members, the parents and the students have ownership in what we are doing, it makes for a more successful climate.

John commented the hope was the school societies' operations do reflect the underlying beliefs held by the parents as they are expressed in the mission statement and constitution.

Board Chairperson Interviews Data

The data on parental involvement in decision making in the schools from the four Board Chairpersons were divided into five categories. The categories are:

(a) how parents are involved in decision making,

(b) perceptions of parental involvement,

(c) benefits, drawbacks, problems with parental involvement in decision making,

(d) how parents should not be involved in decision making,

(e) reflection of the beliefs stated in the school societies' vision or mission statements.

Of the four participants, three are the Board Chairs and one was a Board representative who took the place of the Board Chairperson because he was not available for interviewing. Of the four school Boards represented here, three governed one school each and the fourth Board was responsible for governing four schools. The four Board Chairpersons are referred to as Mark, Tom, Jan, and Ruth. Mark has been on the Board five years and has been the Chairperson for one year. Tom has six years experience as a Board member and was filling in for the Chairperson in the interview. Jan has four years

experience as a Board member and has been Board Chairperson for the past two years. Ruth had previously served six years as a Board member and now is back on the Board after a ten year absence. She has been the Board Chairperson for the past year.

How Parents are Involved

The Board Chairpersons identified two main areas where parents are involved in decision making in the school. The first area was in the makeup of the Board and the Committees of the Board. The second was in the general and special meetings of the school society.

Board and Committees

The Board Chairpersons stated that Board members are elected by the society membership and serve for three year terms. All noted that the principal sits on the Board in an advisory role only and does not have any voting privilege. Jan indicated that "in order for your name to be up for election, two people have to agree to putting your name on a ballot and it goes to the Board for their decision whether or not to let the name stand." Tom reported that the Board has a turnover of three members each year and new members are voted in at a society meeting. People are approached to let their name stand for election and the list is ratified by the Board. Ruth also indicated that the Board presents a slate of names of people for Board positions but that there could also be nominations from the floor at the society meeting prior to the voting. She identified this as a problem because people were nominated based on a single issue and were likely to be elected. She felt this was not positive. Her Board has made some changes to this procedure and will be investigating it further. Mark emphasized the concept that the members have to show good support of the goals and vision as they are stated in the schools constitution. The numbers

of Board members elected for each school society varied and are given in Table 4.2 of the Document section of this chapter.

The Board Chairpersons described the involvement and responsibilities of the members of the Board. Ruth commented the Board has ultimate responsibility and authority. Tom's comment added that the Board is ultimately responsible to the society and is the basic decision making body of the society. All Board Chairpersons saw the Board as responsible for setting policies of the school. Many of the policies came from the various committees of the Board and the Board would ratify the recommended policy after some discussion. The discussion would look at grounds for the policy and the opportunity for questions and comments was given. Two Board Chairpersons added that once a policy was adopted the Board was responsible to follow up to see that the policy was implemented. The policies are implemented or put into practice by the principal and staff. Part of Board members responsibilities involved being a liaison to a committee of the Board.

Significant parental involvement on committees was highlighted by the Board Chairpersons. Committee members were almost always parents according to Mark, although there often was some staff representation on committees such as the Education Committee or the Local Advisory Committee for the Kindergarten program. Tom's comment is representative of the Board Chairpersons:

> Most of those committees have four to seven people and there are probably six or seven committees so that involves a fair number of families right there. And for the most part they are parents that sit on those committees. If a vacancy comes up, generally, the chairman on the committee or the committee itself is looking right away at other parents who may be involved and who have some expertise in that particular area.

The committees were seen as integral structures for the development of policy and involved many of the society members in decision making. The Education

Committee was identified as the most important or significant committee of the Board.

Ruth shared some changes that her Board and schools were going through with regards to the structure of the Board and Education Committee. She related that the situation of having one Board operating four schools brought unique challenges in the areas of governance and decision making. This contrasted with the comments of the Board Chairpersons of the other three school societies. With one Board governing one school they felt there was much opportunity for parents to be involved on decision making bodies. This is explored further in the section on Benefits Drawbacks and Problems.

Mark felt that the Board and committees encourage parents to be involved. He stated:

> the fact (is) that most of us, when we talk, like to be heard. I think the committees, the administrator, the staff, or the board all want input from parents. We want to know their viewpoints and we express on an individual basis, in committees, and at general society meetings that we value their perspective as individual parents and ask for their input on issues.

Parental input and involvement are very important. Mark commented that if an issue came up at a society meeting where there were not a lot of parents present, another meeting would be rescheduled and everyone given notice of the issue to be dealt with. Mark highlighted the importance of the principal in encouraging parents to be involved in decision making. The principal gave presentations at society meetings and always encouraged people to be active. The principal also made contact with parents prior to a meeting to encourage them to be there. Mark felt that the principal had always encouraged parents to be active in the classroom as parent helpers and that this resulted in their more active participation in decision making roles in the school.

Tom also saw the principal as a key factor in encouraging the involvement of parents. The principal was involved with interviews of new parents and made

it a point to stress involvement. Tom added that many parents came to the school because they heard in the community that parents had the chance to be involved to a high degree. Parents were encouraged to make contact with teachers and the principal when concerns arose. If they were not satisfied with results they were encouraged to write letters to and make contact with Board members. The emphasis was on communication; talk about the issues through the proper channels.

General and Special School Society Meetings

The Board Chairpersons noted that a significant number of parents had the opportunity to be involved on the Board or its committees. The other significant areas for parental involvement in decision making were the general and special society meetings held. These meetings were open to all parents and supporters of the school society. The Board Chairpersons indicated that two regular society meetings were held each year, one in the fall and one in the spring. The membership of the school society had opportunity to elect new Board members at the spring meeting.

Financial decisions. The school societies' annual budgets were presented in the spring and the members took the time to discuss and question the contents. A vote to approve the budget was held. Ruth commented that at general society meetings the parents and supporters:

> ... vote on the budget. They vote on things like transportation. They vote on things that affect the society as a whole. Of course, the budget is a big one because it impacts on how many teachers you have and the student-teacher ratio. It impacts on administration. The parents vote for buildings or any building projects that are substantial. They don't vote on maintenance of the roof. But they do vote on whether we need a new gym; whether we are going to put a 1.6 million dollar expansion on ACS. Anything involving great amounts of money has to be done by society approval.

Mark confirmed a similar process for his school society. The fund raising of $100 000.00 was a decision that the society at large would need to make. The arrangements in the society's governance required this.

Each Board Chairperson shared that their school society had special society meetings in addition to the regular annual and semi-annual meetings. The reasons for the special meetings were varied. Each school society did hold a special meeting to discuss new building plans or building expansions. Jan shared that in her school this involved holding an meeting to share information and receive input from all parents as to which direction the school society should proceed with in its building program. Based on this information the Board proceeded to instruct the Building Committee to come up with plans and initial concepts. The plans were brought to the society again for discussion and approval to continue. Any final building proposal approved by the Board would need to be approved by vote at a society meeting before it would go ahead.

Mark outlined a similar process when his school society was considering adding grade ten to their educational program.

> Last year about this time we were considering the addition of a high school beginning at grade ten. As a result there were three special society meetings, and a couple of special board meetings, to deal with the issue, to give everyone the opportunity to voice their concerns. For instance, the first meeting would have been designed to introduce the concept and get approval from the society to go ahead with research as to the feasibility of starting grade ten. Subsequent meetings were for approval or rejection of the plan itself.

Curricular decisions. Mark indicated that they had special society meetings to deal with the sex education aspect of the health curriculum for the school. The meetings were for sharing of information and further discussion. Mark shared that in this case:

> The people that made the curriculum decision ultimately would be the Board. The parent meeting would give very strong direction to the Board. Of course, if there was really strong feeling from the majority of the

> parents in one direction, the Board would be more or less obligated to honour that feeling. Essentially the board ultimately has to make a policy but they have to hear the people too.

The Board Chairpersons indicated that matters of curriculum were directed through the Education Committee and then to the Board. Parent meetings would give strong input and direction on the matters.

Operations decisions. Jan gave another example of parents making a decision at a society meeting. In this case the Board had received from the Transportation Committee a rather ambitious fund raising proposal so buses could be run beyond the county. Jan said the Board was quite apprehensive about the proposal but agreed to have the presentation at the society meeting to see if there was enough support and commitment to go with that amount of fund raising. At the society meeting it was voiced that the service was greatly appreciated and there was support for the proposal. Based on the overwhelming consent of the society the Board agreed to the transportation budget.

Perceptions

Tom felt that parents "have a sense that they are involved, or as involved as they want to be." He stated "we have had no difficulty in getting parents involved in the school." Not all the involvement related directly to decision making but still had impact. Tom remarked that when parents send their children to the school they expected be involved and recognize that they will be asked to participate and help out. The school has limited financial resources and parents must be active out of necessity. Tom shared there would be very few parents that had not been approached in one way or another to participate in the school.

Jan felt that she personally had a lot of involvement in decision making because of her active role on the Board. Jan noted that not all parents have the desire to be active on the Board or committees in that way. "Some parents are content to have their kids go to school and they are happy and don't make waves, just go with the flow." She felt for herself that was not enough. Jan commented that the general membership has confidence in the school and the avenues that are open for involvement. The parents have confidence in their elected representatives.

Mark felt that parents had a positive perception of their involvement. He states:

> I think it is a feeling of confidence that parents do in fact have fair representation on the board and that they do have control of major decisions at a society level. I believe that the vast majority of parents have a lot of confidence in the Board and a lot of confidence in the principal to do what they want done. It is actually quite rare that we have a case of one individual that has a real problem with decisions that are made by (the principal) or the board. I think we have a good working relationship between the leadership and the general membership.

Mark felt the teachers appreciated the parental involvement and perceived it as having positive effects. The parents have ownership in the school and "its always easier to have them involved from the beginning, with ownership in the decisions so that you solve difficulties before they become a problem."

Ruth felt that in the system she was in with one Board and four schools, the parents have not perceived themselves as being involved in curriculum decisions made. She stated:

> I think for many years parents have not been involved in curriculum other than through representation on committees. I also think through the years parents have not really been well informed about what we are doing. Parents have not been aware of various changes that have been implemented.

Ruth expanded on this giving examples of how curriculum in three schools was more or less left up to individual teacher decisions and parents were not

involved. Ruth felt there were a number of frustrated parents who raised questions at meetings and a number of parents from DCS who wrote letters to the Board. The Board had responded by holding focus meetings to hear the concerns and brought the concerns forward to the schools and the teachers.

Benefits, Drawbacks, and Problems

Jan saw parental involvement in decision making as beneficial because of the variety of abilities and talents that could be used for the school. She said, "I am glad I do not have to make major financial decisions because it is not my area of expertise. I am glad that we have people that do have experience in that area and are willing to be involved in that kind of committee." Jan felt she had skills in some areas that she could share and others could contribute to the school in their areas.

Mark also commented on the diversity of parents that make up the school society. He saw benefits in this but identified drawbacks. The diversity of parents and their differing perspectives on the vision of the school could cause difficulties. He pointed to the emphasis on the unity in Christ as balancing the differences. Specific doctrinal issues were not really dealt with in the school and therefore the parents were able to work well together.

Tom found that the time commitments for those involved on the Board and committees were great. This posed problems for many people who tended to be the ones involved in their churches also. His comments about the time commitments needed reflect some tensions.

> It is sometimes difficult. You have to juggle your school commitments with the other things you are involved with. That is the one thing we hear from parents. A lot of the parents who are involved in the school are also involved in their own church councils and church committees and have those types of similar commitments. It is difficult. They have to juggle those things, the church and school and their own families. It can make for a hectic and busy schedule and you get to the point where you have to take a year break from everything, no matter what you are involved in. If you do find something rewarding, you just stay in it.

Tom enjoyed his involvement on the Board and has been on the Finance Committee for ten years. He has found it encouraging to see many parents who find a place within the school where they can be helpful and involved.

Ruth shared some areas of concern or problems that she saw in the governance structures of the Board and schools with which she was involved. There appeared to be tension between the Board and some of the committees. The Employment Relations Committee (ERC) had as part of its mandate the establishment of a salary scale for teachers. Membership on the committee included Board members, teachers, and community members. The mandate of the ERC indicated that they were to gather input from the Board and the staff and then come up with their report. After some revisions the report would be written and given to the Board and teachers. The ERC was to work on a consensus model and the report was basically to be adopted by all. In this sense, Ruth indicated, the ERC had greater autonomy than the Board and this was an area of contention. The process broke down in this school year because one Board member could not come to a consensus with the rest of the ERC. The ERC was disbanded and no agreement was reached or established.

Other tensions were described between the Board and the Education Committee. The principals had interviewed potential substitute teachers and had decided not to put them on the list because they were not supporters of the Christian schools as was required in the policy on teachers in the school. The substitute teachers appealed to the Education Committee who recommended that the substitutes be added to the list because the particular circumstances in the lives of the teachers involved were perceived as good reasons why they were not supporters at that time. The Board questioned the recommendation of the Education Committee, referring back to the policy. Ruth saw this as evidence of tension and indicated that there were other areas where the Education Committee was seen as doing the Board's work and vice versa.

Ruth saw some of these tensions as coming because of re-organization of the Education Committee and how it represented the four schools run by the Board. In the past there had been two committees, one for the elementary grades and one for the high school grades. Now there was one committee for all. The structure was to be reviewed the following year. Other evidence of some tensions in the governance structures arose when there was discussion on the Board and in the society about developing a superintendent position within the school system. Some saw a need for a supervisory position that would keep track of all the schools and focus on developing cohesiveness. Discussion was held at a society meeting. The feedback was negative and the decision was made not to pursue the development of this position.

How Parents Should Not be Involved In Decision Making

The Board Chairpersons felt that there were areas where parents could give input but not make the final decisions. In the case where a school had two grade three classes or split classes the final decision regarding student placement should be made by the administrator. Mark indicated that his school was going through this for the first time and that the Board was developing a policy that indicated the process for the placement of students and put the authority with the principal. The general area of day-to-day operations of the school were seen as the domain of the principal to be worked out in response to input from the staff and the parents. Ruth expanded on this relating to teachers in their classrooms.

> Parents should not necessarily be telling teachers exactly what to do in the classroom. The teachers are trained professionals and are responsible for their specific methodology within their classroom. Parents are somewhat involved in what they teach. One of the issues that came up was censorship. At the Board level, we had a debate about whether we should have the Ecstasy of Rita Joe as a novel , a play in the high school. That's a what. I think in our Christian schools we have to be sensitive to that as well. But I would not want parents saying I'm going to haul these books off your library shelves because they are bad. That kind

> of thing has to be done very much in consultation and with dialogue and a lot of it involves education. I think parents can be involved in a lot of advising. I don't think parents should be involved in telling principals specifically how they should administer the day-to-day operations.

Ruth gave an additional example where principals made decisions about the starting time of the schools. Some parents were affected by the times because they had children in one of the elementary schools and at the high school. She felt that parents should be able to give their input and then the principals take that into consideration. She stated:

> But you can't have parents involved in all those things. The most important person any Board ever appoints to any position, and those are Board appointments, are principals. As a principal you (are given) responsibility for a lot of those things and that is where confidence and trust is very important.

Jan added a comment of how parental involvement should not occur, from a slightly different perspective. She indicated that once a decision had been made by the society that parents should then give support and not continually question or go against the decision. This was echoed by Mark.

> Once a decision is made by a good majority vote in the society, then the whole society feels as if they are obligated to abide by the decision. If they are not involved in the decision it is too easy to disregard it. I think that is one reason for the unity that we do have. It's because of the involvement of a lot of people in the decisions.

School Societies' Beliefs

The Board Chairpersons felt that the beliefs of the school, as written in the constitution and vision statements, were reflected in how the school operated and in the involvement of parents in making decisions. Mark's comment provides a good summary.

> I believe (parental involvement) does (reflect our beliefs) in that our vision is to have the main three influences on a child, the home and the school and the church, all involved in the rearing of the child. I think that involvement of the parents in the school is very important to see that that happens. I believe that the parents should be involved in all stages and

aspects, not just let somebody else have the responsibility when the child leaves the door. In that way, I believe that it insures that the school will be a place where our beliefs, as stated in the constitution, are continually upheld in the school. That what we teach at home will be taught at the school. I think the vision or the direction that was intended with our constitution is being worked out with the parents being involved in decision making and at all levels of decision making. In fact the direction given to the board has its roots in the parents.

CHAPTER 5
SYNTHESIS OF DATA

Introduction

This chapter looks at the data collected from the school societies' documents and the two groups of respondents, principals and Board Chairpersons. The data presented in Chapter Four are synthesized in order to answer the research question - what is the nature and extent of parental involvement in decision making in independent Christian schools? The chapter is organized into sections as follows:

(a) How Parents are Involved
(b) Perceptions
(c) Benefits
(d) Problems and Concerns
(e) Role of the Principal
(f) Reflection of School Societies' Beliefs
(g) Comparison with the Literature
(h) Summary

How Parents are Involved

It is apparent from the data that the governance structures of the school societies and their Boards and Committees require that parents be involved in decision making. It was parents who set up each school society with the goal of operating a Christian school for their children. The Board of each society functions as the governing body and was elected from the membership of the school society. Committees, appointed by the Board and composed mainly of parents, were formed to carry out specific tasks for the Board. From the interviews with the principals and Board Chairpersons and from the school societies documents, parental involvement in decision making can be seen to

have two facets. One was the direct involvement in decision making by all parents at general and special society meetings. The other was representative involvement in decision making through elected Board members and appointed committee members. These two ideas along with three extended concepts are explored in this section under the following headings:

(a) Direct Involvement - General and Special Society Meetings
(b) Representative Involvement - Boards and Committees
(c) Other Avenues for Involvement
(d) Confidence, Trust, Ownership
(e) Communication

Direct Involvement - General and Special Society Meetings

All parents who were members of the school societies had the opportunity to be directly involved in the decision making for their school society by exercising their voting privileges at general and special society meetings. Membership was based on qualifications of age, agreement with the basis of the constitution, and payment of tuition fees or an annual membership fee or donation. Each school society held two general meetings each year and each school society had called special meetings to focus on specific issues.

General Society Meetings

The principals and Board Chairpersons stated that there were two general society meetings held each year for their respective school societies; one was held in the fall and one in the spring. Parents attending the meetings voted on a number of specific items. Parents voted to elect new Board members each year to replace ones that had completed their terms. Parents voted on the annual budget for the next school year as presented by the Board. Parents reviewed and approved the Financial Statements of the school society.

Special Society Meetings

Each of the four school societies in this study had special society meetings; three had a special meeting to discuss and consider building or expansion proposals. The fourth had special focus meetings to discuss concerns. In previous years this school society had meetings to discuss and approve building plans and expansions. In all school societies parents voted to approve building plans and to approve the borrowing of capital to fund the building program. The chairpersons and principals stated that major financial decisions such as these required society approval and were not decisions made by the Board on its own. Other examples of special society meetings where all parents could be part of the decision making included voting on the addition of grades to the school's program and the development and acceptance of a vision statement for the school society.

It is interesting to note that the general and special society meetings were areas where all parents had the right and the opportunity to be part of the decision making. Whether all parents exercised their right and opportunity is questionable and not known. Principals did state that some parents were happy to send their children to the school but were not interested in becoming directly involved. Certainly, efforts were made to have the parents involved. The constitutions indicated that advanced notice for all society meetings was to be given to all society members, stating the time, date, place, and reason for the meeting. Principals and Board Chairpersons stated that efforts were made to encourage parent attendance and participation at society meetings. This was done through special bulletins, regular newsletters, and by word of mouth.

Some special society meetings were called to deal with curriculum or program matters. Both the principals and Board Chairpersons stated that these meetings were for the sharing of information and for discussion about specific issues. Parents would not make a decision at the meeting to approve or reject a curriculum or program change. The input and direction from the parents at the

meeting would go to the Education Committee who made a decision and then passed this decision on as a recommendation to the Board for final approval. Principals and Board Chairpersons did stress that this form of parental input and involvement was very important and that Boards and principals must make it a point to express to parents that their views and input are valued and needed. As one Board Chairperson stated:

> The people that made the curriculum decision ultimately would be the Board. The parent meeting would give very strong direction to the Board. Of course, if there was really strong feeling from the majority of the parents in one direction, the Board would be more or less obligated to honour that feeling. Essentially, the board ultimately has to make a policy but they have to hear the people too.

Other interviewees comments supported this indicating that strong input and direction comes from the parents at these special curriculum meetings. The Board and Committees needed to follow this direction but decisions were directed through the Education Committee and then to the Board.

Ruth felt parents in her school society were not well informed on curriculum matters. She felt parents on the Education Committee were the only ones that were aware of curriculum changes. Parents were becoming frustrated and some wrote letters to the Board and asked questions at meetings. The Board responded by holding focus meetings to listen to parents concerns.

Representative Involvement - Boards and Committees

Major decisions regarding direction of the school society and finances (approval of budget and borrowing of capital) were made by the school society as a whole. Responsibility for other decision making was given to the Board, the representative governing body, who in turn delegated tasks and responsibilities to committees. The Boards' responsibilities were significant. As outlined in the constitutions of the school societies their duties were to:

1. Determine school policies in harmony with the constitution, existing government regulations, and in accordance with the society decisions.
2. Select and appoint principals and teaching staff and other personnel who are qualified to carry out the educational program and other duties in accordance with the policies of the Society. Appointments of these persons shall be made for such terms and upon such salary and other conditions as the board agrees with them from time to time.
3. Devise ways and means for obtaining the funds necessary for the operation of the schools, and determine how these funds shall be distributed.
4. Advance the cause of Christian education in the community by suitable means, and promote this cause in general through association with other Christian schools.
5. Appoint out of its membership such committees as it may deem necessary for the performances of its duties. Such appointments shall be made annually by the President of the Board.

Board members were elected to their positions and committee members were appointed by the Board. The principals and Board Chairpersons stated that parents see the Board as guiding and directing the school on behalf of the parents. Parents elected Board members they felt would represent them in making decisions for them. As Mary stated, "the majority of input and involvement is done through the people elected to the school Board and those who sit on committees". Tom's comment added that the Board is ultimately responsible to the society and is the basic decision making body of the society.

Board Chairpersons and principals stated that parental involvement on committees was strong and significant. Some committee members were staff or teachers but the majority were parents and therefore involved many members from the school society in decision making. The Education Committee was identified as the most important committee of the Board. Decisions made at committee levels were passed on to the Board as recommendations. Interviewees stated that the Board usually ratifies or approves the recommendations unless there are serious concerns.

Decision making by Board members and committee members was seen as representative by parents. Not all parents had the opportunity or the desire to serve on the Board or its committees and be involved with decision making at those levels. Yet, the principals and Board Chairpersons felt that the representation of parents on the Board and committees was great in number and involved a large proportion of all members in the school society. The school society operating BCS had 46 Board and committee members. Beth, principal of BCS, stated:

> When you look at the committees, seven committees with six members on each, you are looking at about 42 bodies. We have about 60 families represented in our school so you can see that although you may have one person occasionally serving on two committees, there is a tremendous amount of involvement and ownership of the parents in the school.

The societies for ACS and CCS had 67 members each on their Board and committees. These numbers are not the exact number of parents involved as some Board members also served on a committee. This does indicate that a large proportion of the families in the school societies is represented on the Board or committees and is involved as decision makers on the Board and its committees. The principals and Board Chairpersons of ACS and CCS also considered their school societies to be small enough that a large proportion of parents would be involved on the Board and committees. Tom's comment clearly shows this; "there would be very few parents that had not been approached in one way or another to participate in the school." Don's comments show a little different perspective. He stated:

> The average parent feels some distance from the school in terms of decision making. There is an avenue for parents through the Education Committee and people who serve on the Education Committee certainly are involved in decision making. But to say that John Smith, who has kids in the school and never served on the Education Committee is involved in decision making; I don't think he would feel he is involved in decision making a whole lot.

The situation was different for the school society that operated DCS. DCS was one of four schools operated by the school society and although there were 87 members on the Board and committees, the proportion of all society members involved on committees was smaller than in the one society one school situations. The Board Chairperson of the society operating DCS stated that there were problems or concerns that arose among the parents of the four schools. Ruth felt parents in each of the schools tended to look after the interests of the one particular school their child(ren) attended.

Other Avenues for Involvement

Principals and Board Chairpersons related additional ways that parents could be involved in decision making. Parents could approach the principal of the school or the parent representatives on the Board or committees to share concerns or give input. While the parents were not exercising decision making authority, these avenues were seen as opportunities to be heard and opportunities to influence those who were in positions to make decisions. Letters could also be addressed to the Board about specific concerns or matters.

Confidence, Trust, Ownership

There was a strong element of parents having trust in those elected to the Board or appointed to committees. Board Chairpersons and principals stated that parents feel they have "elected Board members who will make decisions for them because of like-mindedness." Mark, a Board Chairperson stated:

> I think it is a feeling of confidence that parents do in fact have fair representation on the board and that they do have control of major decisions at a society level. I believe that the vast majority of parents have a lot of confidence in the Board and a lot of confidence in the principal to do what they want done.

The idea of 'ownership' in the school society and the school was brought forward by several principals and Board Chairpersons. They felt parents were

committed to the schools and parents saw an important role for themselves in the education of their children. This was based on the parents' beliefs and philosophy that parents have the primary responsibility for the education of their children. Parental involvement in attending society meetings, electing Board members, participating on committees and working in the schools developed a strong sense of ownership, of having an important role in the education of children.

Connected with trust, confidence, and ownership was parental involvement in the schools in non-decision making roles. Beth pointed out that in her small school, parents helping out in the classroom and school was a necessity. She felt this had a positive impact on how parents were involved in decision making roles. The parental involvement in the day-to-day operation of the school gave perspective and background that benefited parental involvement in decision making at the Board and society level.

The school societies operating one school appeared to have a strong sense of ownership. The school society operating four schools appeared to have more challenges in this area. Parents in this society tended to identify more with the particular school their child(ren) attended and were not as concerned with decisions that would affect the other schools. Ruth, the Board Chairperson for the society operating DCS, described the occurrence of turf wars where Board or committee representatives looked after the interests of their particular school although all were governed by one society.

Communication

A crucial element for involvement in all the areas described was communication. All principals and Board Chairpersons talked about listening to parents and encouraging parents to share insights and views. Some stated "parents needed to be listened to and know that they had been heard." This was accomplished through personal contact between parents and the principal or

Board member, through focus meetings or special topic meetings, through letters, and through surveys or questionnaires.

Parents also needed to be kept informed of developments and happenings in the schools and the school societies. Newsletters, special bulletins or notices, and meetings were means by which parents were informed about issues and topics. The Board, committee, and principal reports at general society meetings informed parents of the state of the school society and the school along with progress and achievement of the society's goals. Two principals highlighted the fact that new parents to the school society were involved in orientation session(s) where they received information on how the school society works and how the school was operated. The principals felt this also assisted in helping parents see how they could become more involved in the school society.

Communication was seen as important in establishing unity and harmony between the parents and the school. There was a focus on building relationships among parents and between parents and teachers within the school society. Breakdown in communication caused a breakdown in the trust and confidence.

Perceptions

Tom stated that parents who belong to the school society and send their children to the school expect to be involved and recognize they will be asked to participate. The principals and Board Chairpersons agreed parents saw themselves as having the opportunity to become involved in decision making. Jan added some parents are content to have their children attend the school and that is enough for them. Tom shared this view saying parents "have a sense they are involved or involved as much as they want to be." He did add parents initially came to the school because they had heard that parents can be involved to a high degree in the school. One principal added "at the same time I think the

majority of parents feel they have elected Board members who will make decisions for them because of like-mindedness." Beth felt that parents perceived their involvement as being successful. A trust relationship had developed over the years between the Board and society and herself as principal. Jan commented that the general membership has confidence in the school and the avenues that are open for involvement. The parents have confidence in their elected representatives.

Don felt that parents perceptions about their involvement in decision making depended on how long they had been with the school society. He noted that parents new to the school were mystified and overwhelmed by all the procedures and workings of the school. Parents needed time to learn the terminology and become familiar with the procedures of the school. Don and other principals recognized the importance of orientating new parents to the school society.

The principals felt positive about the involvement of parents. Don shared, "for me to be effective I need parents to be involved. It is probably not as much as I would like". Don felt that this was due in part to the lack of time he had to encourage involvement and keep parents informed so they could make good decisions. Beth related that "it would be easier for a principal to have total power because then you could just dictate for things to happen. However, to have real growth and real success and cooperation in the school you have to have ownership by the parents." Mary's comment reflected her perception that the involvement of parents is crucial.

> I think for the independent school parental involvement in decision making is the basis of the school. The parents are the governing force because they have been given the responsibility to educate their children. They have the responsibility to be involved and I very much support that idea which is the basis on which the school has been organized.

According to the principals, teachers also perceived the involvement of parents as positive. Most of the comments made here focused more on the

appreciation the teachers had of parents coming in to the classroom and helping out in the day to day activities of the school. John stated the teachers see parents are involved in the governing of the school. "They see it very quickly because their bosses are parents who are Board members. That's direct parent involvement. ... This school society is operated by parents. It's not run by the minister; it's not a parochial school, it's not a church school. It is a parent-controlled school."

Mark felt that parents had a positive perception of their involvement. They had confidence in the board and the representation they had on the Board. Board decisions were accepted well and it was rare that a member of the school society had a real problem with a decision. Mark felt the teachers appreciated the parental involvement and perceived it as having positive effects. The parents have ownership in the school and "its always easier to have them involved from the beginning, with ownership in the decisions so that you solve difficulties before they become a problem."

Ruth felt that in the system she was in with one Board and four schools, the parents have not perceived themselves as being involved in curriculum decisions made. She stated:

> I think for many years parents have not been involved in curriculum other than through representation on committees. I also think through the years parents have not really been well informed about what we are doing. Parents have not been aware of various changes that have been implemented.

Benefits

The principals and Board Chairpersons described the benefits of parental involvement in decision making in terms of human resources and relationships. Jan found the variety of talents and abilities of the parents to be positive for the school society and the school. She felt that she had opportunity to use her skills in areas she was comfortable with and others could contribute in areas where

they had expertise. Beth stated parents were helping in the school and making decisions out of necessity when the school first started and this naturally carried on once the school grew.

The participation of parents in decision making areas and involvement in the day-to-day activities of the school had a further benefit according to the principals. Beth stated involvement developed a sense of ownership of the school in the parents and this was needed for growth, success, and cooperation. Ownership implied that parents had a greater interest in the school and had more at stake in the education of their children. Mark felt the parents have ownership in the school and "its always easier to have them involved from the beginning, with ownership in the decisions so that you solve difficulties before they become a problem."

A further benefit of parental involvement in decision making was the harmony that was developed in the school society and the school. Several principals and Board Chairpersons stated there was a unity of purpose in the school society. There was a common starting point based on common beliefs held by parents and teachers. Mary stated her school "believed a lot in community; the whole idea of love and respect." She commented that even when brokenness occurs the idea is " we are in this together as staff, parents, and Board members in whatever capacity you are serving."

Establishing and building relationships was seen to be a crucial element for the school societies. This required an emphasis on talking and sharing of information between the members of the school society. Some Board Chairpersons and principals stated that open communication established trust and confidence in each other. This was necessary to develop harmony and community. Communication was a key factor.

Problems and Concerns

This section deals with problems the principals and Board Chairpersons encountered with parental involvement in decision making. Problems identified by the principals included (a) lack of information, background, and experience among parents, (b) time needed for the process of involving parents. The Board Chairpersons identified problems in (a) time commitments required, (b) differing perspectives of parents, and (c) breakdown in the governance structures.

Principals

Don felt there were times when parents made poor decisions or mistakes in the decision process. He felt that in these instances parents were not well informed on the topics or were not clear on their responsibilities and authority in decision making. Beth felt that in her community some parents had a lack of understanding about what education, and in particular Christian education, was all about. She felt some parents did not understand the philosophical direction and main goals of the school society; they saw the school too much as a business. Don saw new parents to the school society as lacking information and experience to be involved in decision making. He related steps taken in orientating new parents to overcome this and assist parents in becoming involved.

Principals commented on the time and effort required to involve parents in making decisions. One principal commented that it would be easier for a principal to make all decisions independently. This would, however, not allow the parents to develop the sense of ownership that is seen as important for growth and real success and cooperation in the school. Another stated:

> Sometimes it is a long process to get changes occurring because it means communicating. It means sharing. It means dialoguing. It means trying to understand. It sometimes also means overcoming wrong perceptions, because perceptions for a lot can be reality. But I truly believe that if we are honest and open with one another, that long process, that communication, that dialoguing is healthy for all involved. It

> doesn't necessarily occur over night. It may take a while for the Board to understand and the parents to understand the changes or decisions needed.

Although the time and effort were seen as a concern or drawback, the principals comments also indicated that they saw the process as necessary and ultimately beneficial for the society and school.

Board Chairpersons

Tom stated the time commitment required for parents on the Board and committees was great. This posed problems for these parents as they tended to be those involved in their churches as well. Tom felt that some parents struggled with balancing commitments to their church, the school, and their own families. He felt there were times a person needed to take a year break from all the involvement.

Diversity among parents in terms of gifts and skills was previously listed as a benefit. Mark indicated that diversity could also be a problem. Parents with differing perspectives on the vision of the school could cause difficulties. Ruth saw this problem when people were nominated for a Board position based on their stand on a particular issue. She felt this was not a positive situation.

Ruth shared some concerns that she dealt with relating to the governance structures in her school society. Her particular school society had one Board which governed four schools. In the past the Board had established two Education Committees, one for the elementary schools and one for the high school. For this particular year the two committees had been combined into one. Ruth stated that because the committee had representation from each of the schools any one school's representation was not that high. The size of the committee could become unwieldy. The parent representatives from each school along with the principals occasionally became involved in turf wars; defending or pushing for unique practices in the school they represented. Ruth also found that the parents in the society seemed not be as knowledgable of the

curriculum and often had questions relating to curriculum. In general Ruth felt the re-organization had caused tensions between the Board, the Education Committee, and parents.

Role of the Principal

The data from the school society documents and the statements from the Board Chairpersons identified principals as the key individuals in the school societies. This section focuses on the selection and importance of the principal and the authority and role of the principal as it relates to parental involvement.

Selection and Importance

The school societies' constitutions included a description of the duties of the Board of Directors. One of the five common duties to all school societies indicated the Board was to:

> Select and appoint principals and teaching staff and other personnel who are qualified to carry out the educational program and other duties in accordance with the policies of the Society. Appointments of these persons shall be made for such terms and upon such salary and other conditions as the board agrees with them from time to time.

All Board Chairpersons saw the principal as the key person in the school society. Ruth stated:

> The most important person any Board ever appoints to any position, and those are Board appointments, are principals. The principal is given responsibility for a lot of things and that is where confidence and trust is very important.

Tom's statements supported this. He saw the principal as the key individual in the school society. The principal was involved with interviews of new parents and encouraged involvement of all parents. Mark also highlighted the principals' importance in encouraging parents. In his school society the principal gave presentations at society meetings and made personal contact with parents to

encourage them to be at society meetings. The Board Chairpersons indicated they saw their principals as the one, most crucial person in the school societies.

Authority of the Principal

The principals attended all the Board meetings but were not voting members of the Board. While the principals did not have decision making authority (they did not vote) at the Board meetings, their advisory role was substantial. The principals stated that they had voting authority at the committee level noting especially their role on the Education Committee. The principals stated the authority and responsibilities for carrying out the general day-to-day operations of the school were given to them by the Board. John stated, "the principal operates the school within the policy guidelines set out by the Board: ...that is what I have been hired to do. To carry out Board policy."

The principals felt it would be inappropriate for a parent to come into the school and tell the principal how to run the school. The principals felt strongly that the specific operations of the school were part of their domain of authority but this was balanced with the equally strong feeling that parents do need to be involved and heard. Beth stated that involvement of parents is necessary for growth even though it would be easier for a principal to make the decisions on her own. Don felt, "To be effective, as a principal, I need the parents to be involved." These comments point to the principals wanting to maintain the authority that comes with their responsibilities, but doing so in a manner that reflects parental input and involvement.

In this respect communicating with the parents was very important. Parents needed to be informed about issues, topics, and meetings. Orienting new parents to the school society and the operations of the school was important and necessary. Both the principals and the Board Chairpersons saw the principals as the key people in this communication.

Reflections of School Societies' Beliefs

The comments from the principals and the Board Chairpersons were brief in this area. Generally, it was felt that the decision making process did reflect the vision statements and the beliefs expressed in the constitutions. The idea of community was key, expressed in how society members showed love and respect for each other. The Board Chairpersons also stated the belief that parents have the primary responsibility for the education of their children and that this is a Biblical concept. Parents were to ensure that their children's education was in harmony with the beliefs expressed in the home. Parents are the ones to give direction to the Board. Parents are to be involved in the decision making for their children's education.

CHAPTER 6
SUMMARY, REFLECTIONS, AND IMPLICATIONS

Introduction

The concluding chapter of this thesis consists of three sections. The first section presents a summary of the study including an overview of the purpose of the study, a review of the research design, and a summary of the findings and themes. The second section presents the researchers reflections with regard to the literature reviewed and the research carried out. The final sections in this chapter contains implications and recommendations for practice, areas for further research relating to parental decision making in Independent Christian Schools, and concluding remarks.

Summary

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to find answers to the following question: What is the nature and extent of parental involvement in decision making in independent Christian schools?

A number of more specific questions were proposed to serve as guides to the study and give focus to the collection and analysis of the data. The questions are as follows:

1. What governance structures are in place to allow parents the opportunity for input and involvement in curriculum changes?
2. What governance structures are in place to allow parents the opportunity for input and involvement in the general operations of the school?
3. How do the governance structures encourage or discourage parents from becoming involved in the decision making process in the school?

4. How do principals encourage or discourage parental involvement in decision making?
5. How do principals view increased parental involvement in decision making?
6. What are the parents' perceptions as to their involvement in the school decision making process and the benefits to the school of the involvement?
7. How do parents perceive the principal's role in encouraging or discouraging parental involvement in decision making?
8. How do teachers view parental involvement in decision making?

Research Design

To investigate the nature and extent of parental involvement in decision making in independent schools a naturalistic study with a qualitative approach to the research was used. The focus was on case studies of four independent Christian schools who are members of Christian Schools International. The case study section of the research focused on interviews with principals and Board Chairpersons or representative. The main objective of the interviews was to build a base of knowledge and experiences about the organization and structure of independent Christian schools from the perspectives of the principal and Board Chairperson or representative. Both deductive and inductive analytical approaches were used. Deductive analysis was used when data were collected for a set of predetermined categories based on the sub problems and related questions. Inductive analysis of the interviews was carried out and led to the addition of further categories.

School documents, the results of people's decisions, provided further information for consideration and comparison with the data collected from interviews. The documents were collected from the schools and were analysed to provide concrete information and examples about the structure and

organization of the school. This included the make up and membership of the Schools Society, the Board, and committees of the Board. The documents provided background information about each school relevant to the research topic.

Data from the principals and Board Chairpersons were collected using a semi-structured interview format allowing the respondents the freedom to go beyond the limitations of the questions. The interviews were tape recorded for later transcription. Copies of the transcripts were given to each respondent to allow them to check their remarks for clarity and intent. Data from the school documents was analysed and arranged according to a framework derived from the research questions and the data from the interviews. During the process of data analysis, themes relevant to the study emerged.

Major Findings from the Data

The eight respondents in the interviews provided valuable insights which helped to clarify the extent and nature of parental involvement in decision making. The review of the school societies' documents confirmed how the organizational structures in place in these independent schools provided the framework for significant parental involvement in decision making.

All parents, that were in agreement with the school society's constitution and had paid membership fees, had voting privileges at the general and special meetings of the school societies and could exercise decision making authority in matters such as the election of Board members and in the approval of building programs and annual budgets. It was clear that in these areas of major financial decisions all parents had the opportunity to be part of the decision making. Parents also had the opportunity to give significant input into program and curriculum decisions but authority for final decisions in these areas rested in the hands of the elected representatives on the Board and appointed representatives on Board committees.

Major decision making in the areas of choosing and appointing principals and teaching staff was done by the Board and the Education Committee who were exercising authority as parents representing the society as a whole. The interviewees of the school societies which had one Board and one school felt that parents had confidence in the Board and their decisions made on the parents behalf. For the one school society with one Board and four schools this was also generally true, but there appeared to be some concern that the interests and input of parents in any one school were not always as strongly represented at the Board and committee levels.

The data from the school societies' documents clearly showed that the structures in place for general and special society meetings allowed for significant parental involvement in decision making. The data also showed that a large proportion of parents in each school society was involved on the Board and/or committees and therefore was involved in decision making at those levels. This was especially true for the three school societies that operated only one school. The proportion of parent representation on the Board and committees for the school society operating four schools was less and brought along challenges.

The documents also illustrated how the parents in each school society defined the goals or vision (mission) statement for each school based on their Christian beliefs. Additionally, the duties of the Board as outlined in the constitutions indicated that the Board had significant responsibility and authority in decision making in financial matters, in the choosing of the principal and teaching staff and other personnel, in determining school policies and programs, and in providing leadership to advance the cause of Christian education.

The principals were recognized as being key individuals in the organization. The principals had a significant advisory role on the board although they did not have a vote at the board meetings. The principals were

also key in the communication of information between board, committees, staff, and parents; this was important for establishing confidence and trust.

Confidence, trust, and ownership were vital ingredients in the functioning of the school societies. The members of the school society had the advantage of all starting from a common purpose or vision based on their commonly held Reformed, Christian beliefs about education. This was expressed further in their focus on collegiality and their accountability and responsibility to each other and to God. Ownership and parental involvement in decision making were closely linked together. Whether one caused the other is not easily determined; it is likely that each enhanced or strengthened the other.

Reflections

Comparison with the Literature

The role and authority of school councils in many education systems is being changed and increased. The Chicago School Reform is an example of direct authority and involvement being put into the hands of the parents. A comparison of the Independent Christian Schools and school councils as described in the literature provides some interesting insights. School councils that function in an advisory role as in Alberta and British Columbia have limited effectiveness in involving parents in decision making roles. Parental involvement in decision making has a greater opportunity for success if school councils have mandated or legislated authority as in Chicago although, even then, their effectiveness is dependent on other factors.

Significant Involvement

Lyons et al. (1982) stated that for involvement to be successful, parents must be active in significant school related areas. The direct involvement of parents in decision making at general society meetings of the independent

school societies is significant. The parents decided on the budget for the school society to operate a school. This decision involved total dollar figures and areas of expenditures. Financial decision making authority, exercised by parents directly and carried out by parent representatives on the Board and committees is also significant. Parents in the school society could approve or vote down the school budget each year. They had direct control over the budget and resulting tuition costs.

The Local School Councils (LSCs) in Chicago were also given authority for adopting a local school budget (Hess, 1992, p 162). This was seen as a significant shift in governance from a central board (bureaucratic educational jurisdiction) to the school level (local educational unit) (Hess, 1992, pp. 161-162). In Alberta the school council advises the principal and Board with regards to the fiscal management of the school (Alberta School Act, 1995, section 17). While the authority and responsibility for budget decision making was not as clearly defined as in the Chicago movement the intent was to more actively involve parents in a significant area. Whether this involvement in an advisory role will be effective is not known.

The parents in the Independent Christian Schools studied made decisions about capital expenditures for new building programs or building additions and renovations to present facilities. This financial decision making authority went beyond that given to or exercised by LSCs in Chicago or school councils in Alberta and British Columbia where only a representative number of parents had the opportunity to vote. Parents in the Independent Christian Schools also had input into and approved the actual building plans for new construction or renovations.

The LSCs in Chicago and school councils in Alberta were similar in composition to the Boards and committees in Independent Christian Schools. Parents are elected to these bodies and these representatives make decisions for all the parents. But in the Independent schools studied all parents had the

decision making authority to vote on the annual budget and expenditures of the school. All parents had the opportunity to be involved in decision making roles at general and special society meetings. This was not the case in Chicago and Alberta. No general or special meetings of all the parents and community were held where parents had the opportunity to exercise a vote and decision making authority. Public meetings were held to share information, hold discussions, and receive input.

Principals are the key individuals in the school community (Hess and Easton, 1991). This was a common theme in the literature and in the data obtained in this study. Both the LSCs in Chicago and the Boards of the Independent Christian Schools had the responsibility and the authority to select a principal. The Chicago School Reform Act (1988) mandated that the principal would be given a four year contract at which time the appointment would be reviewed. This was a significant change in the Chicago schools as tenure for principals was no longer a given and the right to terminate a contract was possible.

Governance Styles

The LSC's in Chicago were all established under the statutes and regulations of the Chicago School Reform Act (1988). Would all the LSC's function and operate in the same way? No. The research of John Easton et al. (1993) indicated that several governance styles emerged among the LSC's ranging from limited governance to excessive governance. It is clear that authority given by legislation did not guarantee an effective LSC. Effectiveness depended on other factors including the willingness of the principal and the LSC members to communicate and share with each other, and the trust and confidence they placed in each other.

I believe the boards of the four school societies researched in this study generally had what John Easton et al. (1993) would refer to as the desired model

of governance, the balanced governance style. The data from the interviewees indicates that there was mutual respect and a strong commitment to the schools among the board members and the principals. Information necessary for decision making was shared freely and trust was established. There was some evidence that principals tended to lead or direct the board in many aspects of decision making which would indicate more of a moderate governance style of the board. It is interesting to note that Easton et al. (1993) found this to be the most typical governance style of the LSCs in Chicago.

The principals and the board chairpersons did make a point of stating that communication and trust were vital in maintaining a proper balance in the working relationship of the board members and the principal. There was recognition that a principal could dominate or run the show, either because of his or her actions or by default if the board members did not actively lead. In the four school societies studied, the three that operated one school seemed to be more unified in purpose and direction than the one school society that operated four schools. The organizational structure of one school society, one board, operating four schools with four principals created more opportunity for divisions and challenges among parents, board members, and principals.

Organizational Structure

The organizational structure of LSCs and Independent Christian School Boards was similar. Members of the councils and Boards were elected to their positions by the parents who had students in the school. These representatives made decisions on behalf of the parents. Governance of the school was predominately in the hands of those most affected by decisions. It is interesting to note that in the case of Boards of the Independent Christian Schools there was opportunity to have a member elected who did not presently have children in the school. Such a person could be a strong school supporter who had children in the school previously or would have in years to come. In the LSCs in

Chicago there were also members who did not have children in the school but who still had a vested interest in the school. Of the eleven people making up the council, six were parents, two were community members, two were staff members, and one was the principal. There was more representation by the various stakeholders here than on the Boards of the Independent schools which did not have the any staff represented and nad the principal in attendance only in an advisory capacity. It should be noted that the various committees of the Board, which had significant decision making roles, could have teacher and principal representation on them in decision making roles.

Further Reflections

The four school societies have experienced good involvement of parents in decision making at the society meetings held. One reason for this may be the focus that each of the school societies had on new building plans, renovation plans, or expansion plans. Parents were being solicited for their input regarding the facilities and were involved in the approval of the final building plans and the fund raising that would be needed to finance the buildings or renovations. Parents had a direct interest in what type of facilities their children would be in and in the cost that would need to be covered by society members. Parents have a strong interest in events and decisions that will affect them financially.

The annual meetings held for the discussion and approval of the budget were also areas where parents had good involvement. The school budget and resulting tuition costs affected parents and supporters directly resulting in good attendance at the society meetings.

Implications and Recommendations for Practice

1. Parental involvement in decision making requires that the involvement be significant and that authority for decision making is in the hands of the

parents; parents must be involved in more than an advisory role or capacity.

2. There should be opportunity for parents to have direct involvement where they have decision making authority in areas such as budgets, the approval of building or expansion plans, and in the election of members to represent them on a governing body such as a board. These are areas of significant interest to parents and have an impact on them or their children.
3. Representative involvement plays a significant role in school societies. Organizations need smaller governing bodies or units within them to carry out tasks and functions on behalf of the larger body. Parents elect members to serve on a Board and govern on their behalf. They also have opportunity to serve on the board or on committees of the board. A large proportion of parents from the school society are involved in these areas.
4. It is necessary that there be good communication, trust, and support among parents, board members, the principal, and staff in the school society. It is important that all stakeholders take ownership of the school societies vision based on their common beliefs. Holding to a common vision gives unity of purpose and direction to the school society members and taking ownership is closely connected to involvement in the school. Schools should re-visit or re-establish the vision on a regular basis to ensure that all parents have an understanding of the vision and ownership of it.
5. Parental involvement in the school in non-decision making roles is very beneficial in giving perspective or background for decision making. Board members and parents in general should be in the school and experience some of the day-to-day activities.
6. Principals are key individuals in the organization. The selection and support of the principal should be a high priority for the boards.

7. In school societies that operate more than one school the organizational structures should be reviewed with attention to creating opportunity for parents from each school to be actively involved in the school society as a whole and in the schools their children attend.

Areas for Further Research

1. The relationship between parental involvement in the school and the sense of ownership by parents of the school could be further explored. Is it a cause and effect relationship? Does developing ownership cause parents to become more involved? How does a sense of ownership come about?
2. Independent Christian school societies that operate more than one school could be researched to determine if there are or should be substantial differences in the their governance structures compared to school societies that operate one school. From this study, there appear to be some differences.
3. Further research relating to the Chicago school reform could be carried out now that the Chicago School Reform Act has been in place for several more years.
4. The changes in Alberta with the recent regulations on school councils could be explored to determine if school councils functioning in an advisory role have any significant impact in the schools or whether there is any significant involvement of parents in decision making.

Concluding Remarks

Having been involved in independent Christian schools for fifteen years, twelve of those years being in administration, has afforded me the opportunity to experience relationships and dynamics of governance within school societies and the schools they operate. The parents, supporters, and teachers in the

independent Christian schools have demonstrated a commitment to providing education for their children, one that is based on their beliefs. They are committed to their organizations and strive to have them operate in a way that is responsive to their beliefs. The school societies and the schools they operate continue to experience growth. With the growth comes the challenge of continuing to function in a way that reflects the beliefs of the society. How governance occurs in the schools and how the individuals in the school societies treat each other will continue to need focus and attention.

In the school societies researched for this study, parents are and will continue to be actively involved in the education of their children. They will be involved in the classrooms of the schools and in the governance of the schools through active decision making allowed them by the organizational structures of the school societies.

References

Alberta Education. (1995). School councils handbook: Meaningful involvement for the school community. The Crown in Right of Alberta

Alberta School Act (1988) Sections 17, 45

Alberta School Act (1995) Section 17

Ayers, W. (1991). "Perestroika" in Chicago's schools. Educational Leadership, 48, 69-71.

British Columbia School Act (1989) Section 8

Bacchus, M., & Marchiafava, B. (1991, April). Implementing school reform in Chicago: The system perspective. Paper presented to the American Educational Research Association, Chicago. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 331 887)

Barth, R. (1990). Improving schools from within. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Bennet, A.E., Bryk, A.S., Easton, J.Q., Kerbow, D., Luppescu, S., Sebring, P.A. (1992). Charting reform: The principals' perspective. Chicago: Consortium on Chicago School Research. (ERIC Document Service No. ED 353 700)

Boyd, B. (1986, April). Collaborative decision making in local development of school policy and practices. In, A state in action: Working with schools for program improvement. Symposium presented at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association, San Francisco.

(ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 271 859)

Brown, D.J. (1990). Decentralization and school-based management. Philadelphia, PA: The Farmer Press

Chaukin, W. (1987). Enhancing parent involvement. Education and Urban Society, 19, 164-184.

Clinchy, E. (1989, May. Chicago's great experiment begins: will radical decentralization bring school reform? Equity and Choice, 5(3), 40-43

Dlugosh, L.L. (1993, February). Planning makes perfect. Executive Educator, 15, 63-64.

Easton, J.Q., Flinspach, S.L., O'Conner, C., Paul, M., Qualls, J., & Ryan, S.P. (1993 March). Local school governance: The third year of the Chicago school reform. Chicago, IL: Chicago Panel on Public School Policy and Finance.

Epstein, J.L. (1987). What principals should know about parent involvement. Principal, 66, 6-9.

Erikson, D.A., MacDonald, L., & Manley-Casimir, M.E. (1979). A study of the consequences of funding independent schools: Characteristics and relationships in public and independent schools. San Francisco: University of San Francisco, Center for Research on Private Education.

Ford, D.J. (1992, April). Chicago principals under school based management: New roles and realities of the job. Paper presented to the American

Educational Research Association, San Francisco. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 353 632)

Foster, K. (1984). Parent advisory councils: School partners or handy puppets? Principal, 63, 26-31.

Fullan, M.G. (1991). The new meaning of educational change. New York, NY: Teachers College Press

Glass, T.E. (1991). Chicago school reform: Only the first step. School Community Journal, 1, 39-42.

Greenleaf, R.K. (1977). Servant leadership. New York. NY: Paulist Press.

Hansen, B.J., & Marburger, C.L. (1989). School based management: A manual for training school councils. Columbia, MD: National Committee for Citizens in Education.

Hansen, E.M. (1991). Educational administration and organizational behavior (3rd ed.). Boston: Allyn and Bacon.

Hatton, J. (1993, November 1). Restore public schools to the people. Alberta Report, pp. 34-37.

Hess, G.A. (1992). Chicago and Britian: Experiments in empowering parents. Journal of Educational Policy, 7(2), 155-171.

Hess, G.A. (1993) Decentralization and community control. In S.L. Jacobsen, & R. Berne (Ed.) Reforming education: The emerging systemic approach, (pp. 66-86). Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.

Hess, G.A., & Easton, J.Q. (1991, April). Who's making what decisions: Monitoring authority shifts in Chicago school reform. Paper presented to the American Educational Research Association, Chicago. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 334 643)

Hewitson, M. (1992, July). Deciding about decision making. Paper presented to the National Conference of the Australian Council for Educational Administration, Darwin: Northern Territory. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 351 768)

Hollaar, L. (1989). Faith and culture in the governance of Calvinistic/reformed Christian schools. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Alberta, Edmonton.

Lyons, P., Robbins, A., & Smith, A. (1982). Involving parents: A handbook for participation in schools. Ypsilanti, MI: High/Scope Press.

Malen, B., & Ogawa, R.T. (1985). The implementation of the Salt Lake City school district's shared governance policy: A study of school-site councils. Salt Lake City: Salt Lake City School District. (ERIC Document Reproduction Services No. ED 274 099)

Marsh, C. (1988). Spotlight on school improvement. Allan & Unwin Australia Pty Ltd.

Miller, E. (1995). School councils: The reality and the dream. Unpublished master's thesis, University of Alberta, Edmonton.

Neal, R.G. (1991). School based management: A detailed guide for successful implementation. Bloomington, IN: National Education Service.

Seeley, D.S. (1985). Education through partnership. Washington, D.C.: American Enterprise Institute for Public Policy Research.

Sergiovanni, T.J. (1991). The principalship: A reflective practice perspective (2nd ed.). Boston: Allyn and Bacon.

Sergiovanni, T.J. (1992). Moral leadership. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Sergiovanni, T.J., & Starratt, R.J. (1988). Supervision: Human perspectives. Newyork: McGraw-Hill.

Stronks, G.G., & Blomberg, D. (1993). A vision with a task. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books.

Walsh, B.J., & Middleton, J.R. (1984). The transforming vision. Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press.

Appendix A

April 11, 1994 / **April 20, 1994 - revision**
Frank Voogd - development of interview guide

Statement of Research Problem

The purpose of this study is to find answers to the following question: **What is the nature and extent of parental involvement in decision making in independent Christian schools?**

A number of more specific questions will serve as guides to the study and give focus to the collection and analysis of the data. These questions serve to define the limits of the study however, the design will be open to additional questions that may arise in the initial phases of data collection. An explanation of terms is given in order to have some common understanding as they are used in the questions. An interview guide with questions has been developed for principals and for the Board Chairperson. The guides are essentially the same with minor changes in wording. The questions with bold numbers are worded directly from the sub problems in the proposal.

In researching this problem, I am looking for what the school has in place for parental decision making and what the principal's and Board Chairperson's perspective on parental decision making in the school is.

Introduction to the Interview

- introductions
- establish rapport
- discuss tape recording of the interview and test the recorder
- obtain informed consent and understanding of the right to opt out

- discuss the explanation of terms if necessary or use for reference

Conclusion to the Interview

- thanks
- request for materials
- transcript for approval
- possible follow-up questions

Explanation of Terms

The following explanations of terms are given to provide consistency of usage throughout the study. They are arranged alphabetically.

curriculum changes -- addition, revision, or deletion of curriculum.

decision making -- authority to vote on changes, hire staff, initiate new programs, decide direction

general operations -- examples of the general operations of the school include such things as length of school day, hours of operation, playground rules, placement of students.

governance structures -- board, committees, policies, procedures, and practices in place that determine the operation of the school

Independent school -- a school other than a public school or separate school (Alberta) or a school other than a public school (British Columbia). There are a variety of Independent schools. The ones in this study are of the type identified as parent run or parent controlled Christian schools.

parental involvement -- membership on decision making bodies such as the board and committees where advice, input, and influence can be exercised.

school board -- an elected body of people that operates the school(s) on behalf of the school society.

school society -- a membership of parents and supporters who have formed a group or society with the purpose of operating school(s).

Interview Questions for Principals.

1. How long have you been with the school? How long have you been in your present position? (principal, board chair person)

   Have you had administrative or teaching experience in other schools? In public schools?

2. In your position or role, how are you involved in decision making in your school? note -- focus on areas discussed or referred to in terms -- curriculum, general operations, hiring of teachers and staff

3. How are parents involved in the decision making process in the school?

(4) What *governance structures* are in place to allow parents the opportunity for input and involvement in decision making with respect to *curriculum changes*?

5. Can you give some examples of how parents have been involved in decision making with respect to curriculum?

(6) What *governance structures* are in place to allow parents the opportunity for input and involvement in decision making with respect to the *general operations of the school*?

7. Can you give some examples of how parents have been involved in decision making with respect to the general operations of the school?

(8) How do the governance structures encourage or discourage parents from becoming involved in the decision making process in the school?

(9) How do you as principal encourage or discourage parental involvement in decision making?

What initiatives have you taken in the last 2 years to involve parents more in the decision making in the school?

How does the board or board chairperson encourage or discourage parental involvement in decision making?

What initiatives has the board taken in the last 2 years to involve parents more in decision making?

(10) How do you as principal view the present level of, or increased, parental involvement in decision making?

(11) In your view, what are the parents' perceptions as to their involvement in the school decision making process?

(12) How do parents perceive your role as principal in encouraging or discouraging parental involvement in decision making?

How do parents perceive the role of the board or board chairperson in this area?

(13) How do teachers in your school view parental involvement in decision making?

14. What do you see as the benefits of parental involvement in decision making?

15. What do you see as the drawbacks of parental involvement in decision making?

16. Are there areas of decision making that you feel parents should not be involved in?

17. *What are major or identifiable problems that you run in to in involving parents in decision making?*

18. Does parental involvement in decision making in your school reflect the stated beliefs in the school's mission statement, handbook, or constitution?

19. Are there any other related comments or further insights you wish to share?

REQUEST

-- documents related to or outlining parental involvement in decision making

- constitution
- mission statement
- policies
- Board Handbook / Parent Handbook

Interview Questions for Board Chairperson

1. How long have you been with the school? How long have you been in your present position? (principal, board chairperson)

2. In your position or role, how are you involved in decision making in your school? note -- focus on areas discussed or referred to in terms -- curriculum, general operations, hiring of teachers and staff

3. How are parents involved in the decision making process in the school?

(4) What *governance structures* are in place to allow parents the opportunity for input and involvement in decision making with respect to *curriculum changes*?

5. Can you give some examples of how parents have been involved in decision making with respect to curriculum?

(6) What *governance structures* are in place to allow parents the opportunity for input and involvement in decision making with respect to the *general operations of the school*?

7. Can you give some examples of how parents have been involved in decision making with respect to the general operations of the school?

(8) How do the governance structures encourage or discourage parents from becoming involved in the decision making process in the school?

(9) How does the principal encourage or discourage parental involvement in decision making?

How do you as a board or board chairperson encourage or discourage parental involvement in decision making?

What initiatives have you or the board taken in the last 2 years to involve parents more in the decision making in the school?

(10) How do you as board chairperson view the present level of or increased parental involvement in decision making?

(11) In your view, what are the parents' perceptions as to their involvement in the school decision making process?

(12) How do parents perceive your role as board chairperson in encouraging or discouraging parental involvement in decision making?

How do parents perceive the role of the principal in this area?

(13) How do teachers in your school view parental involvement in decision making?

14. What do you see as the benefits of parental involvement in decision making?

15. What do you see as the drawbacks of parental involvement in decision making?

16. Are there areas of decision making that you feel parents should not be involved in?

17. *What are major or identifiable problems that you run in to in involving parents in decision making?*

18. Does parental involvement in decision making in your school reflect the stated beliefs in the school's mission statement, handbook, or constitution?

19. Are there any other related comments or further insights you wish to share?

REQUEST

-- documents related to or outlining parental involvement in decision making

- constitution
- mission statement
- policies
- Board Handbook / Parent Handbook
-
-

Appendix B

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN THE STUDY -- INTERVIEW PARTICIPANTS

University of Alberta Frank
Voogd
Department of Educational Administration Phone - 492-4913 (U of A)
Edmonton, Alberta
451-3387 (home)

10957-144 street

Edmonton, Alberta

T5N 2W4

April 27, 1994

Dear Principal / Board Chairperson,

My name is Frank Voogd and I am a graduate student in Educational Administration at the University of Alberta. As part of my master's degree requirements, I am conducting research on parental involvement in decision making in Independent Christian schools.

I am interested in learning about how the school's setup, organization, and governance structures allow for parental involvement in the decision making process. Your input and sharing of your perceptions will be valuable.

This interview should be about one hour in length. Your name and your school will not be identified in the reporting of the research and the research results. I will keep such information confidential. I will share the results of the interview with you and provide you with an opportunity for clarification. If needed, I will contact you with any follow-up questions that may arise from further research. With your permission I would also like to audio tape record this interview.

As a participant, you have the right to opt out of participating in this study at any time and simply need to inform me if you wish to opt out. My address and phone number are on this sheet and you may contact me at any time if you have questions or if you wish to no longer participate.

Please indicate your willingness to participate in this study by signing in the space provided below. Thank you for your time.

Frank Voogd

I, _____, understand the information provided and consent to participate in this study as described above.

_____ _____

Signature

Date

Appendix C

Vision Statements

The vision statements of each school society indicate the world view they operate from and give direction as to the why and how of Christian education for their particular school. The school society for ACS describes its purposes in an opening section of the ACS Handbook. BCS's school society developed a Mission Statement based on the phrase - Faith in Action. The school society for CCS has a concise written Vision Statement indicating to its members and newcomers the direction of the school. The school society for DCS indicates its direction through a Philosophy of Education (Vision) which is included in the Handbook of the school.

ACS - The Purpose of Christian Education

> The ACS by the grace of God, has come about through the convictions of committed Christians to educate their children in such a way that their lives in school and in society may be lived in service to Christ. The ACS is founded on the purpose of educating Christian young people to glorify God in all of life's activities. Children, as a gift from God, are to be nurtured so that they too gain the responsibility to heed Christ's call to bring all of life in subjection to Him. This conviction derives its biblical base from the Bible's teachings concerning the Kingship of Jesus Christ over all created reality. We glorify Him by expressing our life to him and by living according to the commands of His Word. The Christian School, therefore, takes seriously the task of nurturing children to develop a way of living which is directed and guided by scripture. A Christian education challenges children, as students, to live a meaningful life in relationship to the creation, to others, and to God. In light of this educational direction, Christian education strives not only to impart a certain way of viewing the world, but seeks to encourage children to live lives of service. May our children be models of embodied Christian faith. Education of our children - this is Kingdom work - work which by the grace of God may bear fruit. May we continue to wrestle in fear and trembling as to how to nurture children unto obedient living to the Lord. (2nd paragraph??)

BCS - Mission Statement - Faith in Action

We are **following** a Lord who is **alive**, who **instructs** us through his Word and **transforms** our **hearts**. He gives us the **insight** and shows us how much we **need** Him.
Because of Him, I will be **active** in His world, **compassionate** to His people, learn to **teach** others and **imitate** Him by my **obedience** as He makes me into a **new** creation

FOLLOWING	John 12:26
ALIVE	I Cor. 15:20-22
INSTRUCT	II Tim. 3:16
TRANSFORMS	II Cor. 3:18
HEARTS	I Thess. 3:13
INSIGHT	Phil. 1:9-10
NEED	Ps. 142
ACTIVE	Philemon 6
COMPASSIONATE	Col. 3:12
TEACH	II Tim. 2:2
IMITATE	Eph. 5:1
OBEDIENT	I John 3:24
NEW	II Cor. 5:17

CCS - Vision Statement for CCS

We believe that God is Lord of all creation and that he created each person in His image. The Bible, as God's inspired Word, guides us and is the foundation for all learning

Therefore, as a school community we endeavour to meld all our teaching and learning to reflect the glory of God.

By providing a Christ-centered learning environment, we strive to equip all our children with knowledge, skills, strategies and insights that will enable each of them to fully develop their God-given gifts. Specifically, we aim to nurture in our children a personal love and respect for God. others and creation.

We acknowledge the joint responsibility and mutually supportive roles of home and school, and so together we educate our children for lives of obedience and service to God both now and in the future.

DCS - School Philosophy (Vision)

The basis for our Christian School is the infallible word of God as found in the Old and New Testament. We express a Reformed word and life view that recognizes that all of life is to serve and glorify God and to uphold the Kingship of Christ in all things.

We See Christian schooling as a program of training and nurturing to assist parents in educating their children for life-service to Christ. In this program of nurturing for responsible service in Christ we intend to:

1. Display and share the basis, framework and implications of a Christian vision of life.
2. Promote conceptual development and nurture abilities that:
   a. proclaim the unity and diversity of God's marvellous creation.
   b. involve students in responsible discipleship.
3. Enable students to experience the meaning of living from a Christian world-life view.

Throughout the Christian School Program we hope that we will;

1. Reflect glory and give service to God.
2. Be faithful to scripture as God's Word for life.
3. View people (young and old(from the Biblical perspective, that is appreciate them as:
   a. unique with varied abilities and talents.
   b. image bearers of the Lord with the challenge to care for and use creation responsibly.
   c. sinners who are redeemed through Christ.
   d. whole people with responsibilities to God, others and self.
4. Understand knowledge from the Biblical perspective (wisdom and discernment).
5. Recognize that meaningful learning involves:
   a. love and service to God - and affair of the heart.
   b. a clear focus - showing God's way and unfolding of God's creation.
   c. the whole person in activities of discovery, creativeness, care and service now.